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Grassroots Development

Journal of the Inter-American Foundation

Focus: Investing in Young People



VOLUME 34

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The purpose of this journal is to share grassroots development experiences with a variety of readers. The editor encourages submissions on relevant topics including, but not limited to, the following:

- how the poor in Latin America and the Caribbean organize and work to improve their lives;
- issues and trends in the development community;
- how institutions cooperate to further the development of the region.

Please direct query letters to Paula Durbin at the above address or e-mail pdurbin@iaf.gov.



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Paula Durbin



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Focus: Investment in Young People

To see how a country will turn out in five years, look at its young people.

—Fabián Ferraro, founding director, Club Atlético Defensores del Chaco

Patrick Breslin



Above and right: Young Colombians in the Bosconia program.

It is my pleasure to introduce this issue of *Grassroots Development* focused on the Inter-American Foundation's support for youth, a topic that has never been more relevant. Today, more than half of the world's 7 billion individuals are under 30, giving us the largest generation of young people in history. Most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean mirror this demographic and the few exceptions hover just above it.

As a national statistic, youth can correlate with poverty. The poorest countries are often those with the youngest population. Similarly, young people normally comprise a disproportionate share of those living below national poverty lines, and they are often the most vulnerable sector within each disadvantaged group. Even during good times they can be left behind if they are unprepared for a productive life and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Denied viable opportunities to work or continue in school, many of those known as the “*ni, ni*” (*que ni estudian, ni trabajan*) provide a pool of recruits for gangs who further undermine the economic, social and political health of their communities. But I would insist that viewing youth through the lens of impending danger results in a narrow focus that distorts the reality.

While young people are at the center of many of the hemisphere's most daunting challenges, they are also a source of hope and tremendous opportunity. In the IAF's experience, we find they are smart, work hard and, given the chance, contribute significantly to their communities. Since beginning operations in the 1970s, the Inter-American Foundation has interpreted its congressional mandate as a call to invest in young people, whether they are part of a struggling family or are fending for themselves. For more than

40 years, the IAF's grantee partners have assured generations of disadvantaged children and adolescents the safe and healthy start, good education, access to trustworthy adults, development of their talent, grooming in democratic practices, and personal validation that lead to a meaningful place in society. As young people mature, our partners have helped ease the transition to adulthood with training in marketable skills, job placement and start-up capital for new enterprises.

This issue of our journal draws upon the IAF's decades of experience with grassroots initiatives that channel youthful energy into effective citizenship. It starts, appropriately, with the Bosconia program in Colombia, a signature grantee partner from the IAF's early years and among the most successful efforts anywhere in terms of numbers of kids pulled from the streets and, as they age out, of placing them in jobs. All of these are compelling stories of investment in change that counts and often starts with assets as intangible as pride and a sense of purpose. Another common element is the expectation that the young people themselves drive their programs and, over time, adapt them to evolving needs and circumstances. The articles also offer a glimpse into some of the adults who have guided the development of these essential organizations, bringing to mind the "searchers" described by William Easterly as key to intelligent support for development. Each organization profiled embodies values that work to make conditions better. Inevitably, questions of sustainability loom: How can we build a wider base of support for these grassroots pillars of our communities that not only benefit the young but welcome them as primary agents? How can they maintain a consistently high level of creativity and energy in initiatives that need to reach ever larger numbers of people?

The journal's focus on young people doesn't stop with its profiles of our grantee partners. Marion Ritchey-Vance brings us into contact with the millennials who took her course on foreign assistance at Carleton College. And the Forum for Fellows features juried articles showcasing young scholars whose work



was supported by the IAF, the only donor that specifically funds academic research targeting grassroots development in Latin America and the Caribbean. A peer review by scholars on the IAF's Academic Review Committee resulted in the selection of two articles for publication in this issue, one on the educational efforts of the Brazilian landless workers' movement and the other on social capital among indigenous Peruvians in the Amazon region. A third Fellow, who researched grassroots mobilization to counter the HIV/AIDS crisis in Brazil, collaborated with the former IAF representative who had awarded and monitored the IAF's essential early support. Their article underwent an independent peer review in Brazil.

Years ago, in a much different context, Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke of "the fierce urgency of now." Those words come to me as I write about the IAF's investment in young people, who not only will determine what kind of future the world will have but very clearly shape the present. Supporting them as they realize their potential will help their communities thrive.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "Robert N. Kaplan". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert N. Kaplan
President
Inter-American Foundation



First-Class Citizens: Father de Nicoló and the Street Kids of Colombia

By Patrick Breslin

All photos by Patrick Breslin

At dawn, most mornings during the last four decades, a white van would stop near a highway overpass in Bogotá and sound its horn. After a few moments, a shaggy head would pop up among the tumbled rocks and concrete chunks and cardboard boxes under the highway. Slowly, boys would emerge, baggy clothes hanging like blankets from their shoulders, faces dirty and slack with sleep and pick their way from makeshift shelters toward the van's open doors where one man was tilting a coffee urn to fill plastic cups, another arranging fresh buns on a tray. It was breakfast time for Bogotá's street kids, thanks to an organization started by a young priest who had also grown up in poverty, in war-ravaged Italy. Out of the initial meetings between the street-wise priest and the street-wise kids a program emerged that has offered more than 40,000 young Colombians the education and moral support they needed to become productive citizens and has inspired similar programs around the world.

The coffee and buns always came with an invitation to a nearby daily shelter providing hot showers and meals, medical attention and opportunities for recreation. There the boys would learn about a residential program that included schooling, vocational training, the chance for an eventual job. The choice was theirs. They could stop with the coffee and return to the street; they could stop with occasional showers. Or they could apply to embark on the path to a very different future. What distinguished this program, known as Bosconia-La Florida, from most other approaches to juvenile poverty and delinquency was the lack of coercion. The kids were in the program from start to finish by their own decision. They could even drop out at any stage and be welcomed back.

This profile of Father Javier de Nicoló, the priest who put freedom at the center of his program, is the sixth in a series for *Grassroots Development* examining the experiences and personal qualities that have shaped successful grassroots leaders in Latin America. Among the qualities that enabled Father de Nicoló to make a pedagogic breakthrough on the streets of Bogotá were tremendous energy, a cavalry-officer-like confidence that reinforcements will appear to fortify any position he seizes and, most importantly, the ability to see human potential where others saw only problems.

By the 1960s, there was general agreement that street kids in Bogotá and other Colombian cities were a big problem, one of many spawned by a violent process of social change. In Colombia's first century as a nation, successive civil wars between Liberals and Conservatives had bled any practical or even ideological meaning from the two parties. In this insecure and hostile environment, party allegiance became more a part of a person's identity, and often a life and death matter, than a political and policy preference. These allegiances were handed down within families and jealously maintained by rural elites. Gabriel García Márquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is perhaps a better guide to the nature of this system than any political science textbook.

But in the 20th century, economic pressures sent peasant families migrating in search of work, mainly to the cities. Free for the first time from the rural oligarchy's heavy thumb on the electoral scale, many migrants gravitated to the increasingly reformist and populist Liberals, shifting the balance of power away from the Conservatives. Political tensions and violence increased through the 1940s, culminating in the *bogotázo*, a bloody explosion of rage following the

assassination of a popular Liberal leader in April 1948 that left some 3,000 dead and hundreds of buildings in downtown Bogotá destroyed or burning. Military intervention restored order, but the killing metastasized in the countryside in the following decade, a period that came to be known as *la violencia* driving new waves of terrorized migrants to the relative safety of the cities.

Out of this background of poverty and trauma, the street kids invaded the centers of Bogotá and other cities. Frequently fleeing abuse at home, they sought security and comradeship in *galladas*, small gangs formed for protection and for petty crime. They roamed city streets, begging, stealing, mugging, scavenging and otherwise fending for themselves. Wristwatches and hubcaps were favored targets of opportunity. They slept in doorways and under bridges, dodged the police, sniffed glue, smoked marijuana and affronted conservatively dressed *bogotanos* with their oversized handoff clothes that provided convenient spaces for weapons, drugs and stolen goods. They were generally considered a plague. It took a special kind of experience to see the positive potential in the ragamuffins.

Javier de Nicoló, then a 21-year-old Italian seminarian, arrived in Colombia a year after the *bogotázo*, and he knew first-hand what war, violence and poverty did to families. His father was wounded three times in World War I, was discharged from the army in an era when veterans received no pensions, and died when Javier was still a child. He left six children to be raised by their devout mother in Bari, an Adriatic port just above Italy's boot. By the mid-1930s, Italy was again at war, and both of Javier's older brothers were called up. During World War II, Javier pursued his vocational training in a slaughterhouse, after bombing raids destroyed his high school.

In the immediate post-war years, Italy continued to be racked by internal strife, poverty and shortages. "I managed to finish high school, but I was malnourished," de Nicoló recalled. "I found occasional little jobs, working nights, coming home for a bowl of soup in the morning, sleeping a bit and then going to school, very much how people live in the informal economy in Colombia today. But what helped me most was a club for young people, a place to play football or billiards or take part in theatre, the

activity I liked best. I played clowns, did pantomime, made people laugh. I even told fortunes, reading cards or dice. The club was run by the Salesians, who were famous for working with young people." Founded in 19th century Italy by Don John Bosco, the order cared for poor children and encouraged vocations to the priesthood. By the mid-20th century, the Salesians had carried their work to dozens of countries around the world, many in Latin America.

"Have you ever thought about becoming a priest?" de Nicoló was asked once at the club.

"The truth is," he explained, "I'd never thought about it, and the question just hung in the air. One day at a conference, a speaker asked us what the best profession was. We didn't know. Doctor? Engineer? Soldier or sailor? But he said the best profession was to serve humanity, no matter how. And he said it so convincingly that it stayed in my mind. It was one of those moments that planted a seed." Soon after, the Salesians arranged for de Nicoló to continue his studies in Naples. Early on, he decided he would quit and return home. "But one of the priests said to me, 'You came here without thinking it through and now you're leaving without thinking it through. Finish your degree and then decide,'" he recalled. As a student, he heard a missionary describe his work in Colombia. "He spoke of a marvelous country where there was so much work to do, so much poverty," de Nicoló said. "And that decided me. I agreed to join the Salesians and soon after I was on a boat leaving Genoa for Buenaventura."

During the 1950s, de Nicoló continued to pursue his studies while working in poor neighborhoods in cities throughout Colombia: Bogotá, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Bucaramanga. Late in that decade came another moment that would mark his life. In Rome, Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council to chart the direction of the Catholic Church. It generated a world-wide demand for information. De Nicoló, who had been ordained in 1958, was asked to report on the situation of young people in Latin America, an assignment that took him to most of the countries of the region. "What impressed me most were the conditions of young people in prisons," he said. "I was outspoken about that, and finally someone said, 'You are watching the bulls from the seats. If you were down in the arena, you



Padre Javier de Nicolás.

would think differently.’ And that decided me. ‘I’m going to work in the jails,’ I said.”

In 1968 and 1969 de Nicolás served as chaplain in Bogotá’s juvenile prison, which changed his mind. “I realized that in a couple of months, the boys I was talking to in prison would be out on the streets again,” he explained. “Wouldn’t it be better, I thought, to work with them when they were free rather than when they were captives? So I started going around Bogotá at night, getting to know the places where they gathered, talking with them, organizing outings, winning their trust. I had a strategy, but I needed a shelter. And I discovered that the Salesians owned an abandoned house. So I had a shelter, but no money. I had a few contacts at Ecopetrol [the state-owned oil company] and they got me, not money but 600 tons of scrap metal that I could sell.” He also put toward his program the honoraria he received for lectures and preaching at retreats. Once he took 207 street kids to a beach near Santa Marta, on Colombia’s distant Caribbean coast. The railroad provided free passage. Most of the boys had never been outside Bogotá, never been on a train. “Late at night I went through the cars,” de Nicolás recalled. “No one was in the seats.

They were all under the seats. Sleeping on the floor was normal for them.

“The program began to grow. I found more spaces for shelters. At the beginning it was all voluntary. And then in 1970 the Bogotá district government invited me to work with them. But I was hesitant. I already knew it could be complicated to work with the government, because you could lose your freedom of action. So I told them the first thing we needed was a census of the street kids, and then I went and did the census and delivered the information. The officials looked at it and said, ‘Well, it seems you know what needs to be done, so why don’t you become the director of our program?’”

For most of the next four decades, de Nicolás directed both the government’s Instituto Distrital para la Protección de la Niñez y la Juventud (IDIPRON) and the nongovernmental organization he had founded, Fundación Servicio de Orientación Juvenil (FSJ). It proved an effective partnership. IDIPRON brought in government resources and FSJ contributed energy and creativity. The division of labor was geographic—IDIPRON provided land, buildings and financial support for all the youth programs operating within

the federal district of Bogotá. FSJ administered the programs operating elsewhere in the country and was the beneficiary of international funding, including major grants from the Inter-American Foundation. Created by Congress at the end of 1969, IAF was still feeling its way in Latin America and the Caribbean in the early 1970s. In late 1974, Marion Ritchey Vance, then IAF representative for Colombia, was in Bogotá attending a presentation by a religious charity on its work with young people. She noticed a silver-haired priest in the audience who seemed to share her skepticism about the approach being described. They began to chat.

"Would you like to see a program that deals with kids in a totally different way?" Javier de Nicolás asked. When she subsequently visited La Florida, the residential school set in attractive grounds on the city outskirts, Ritchey Vance expected to be met by de Nicolás himself or by the priest who directed the school. Instead, a young boy was waiting to give her a tour of the campus. He turned out to be the elected mayor of the community and he introduced her to the other students. "They just turned me loose with the kids," Ritchey Vance recalled, "and I could ask anything. I hardly believed what I was seeing. I'd read about the street kids and seen them downtown. And here I was being escorted by these neatly groomed, polite, boundlessly enthusiastic young men. Only when it was time for lunch did I finally sit down with the priests."

Ritchey Vance was even more impressed on a subsequent visit. And any doubts she might have had about de Nicolás and his team's street cred disappeared on a day that began with a young thief snatching a gold chain and pendant from her neck in front of her hotel. Shortly after, she told de Nicolás the story before continuing her meetings. Through boys in the program, the priest put the word out on the street. That night, at a dinner in La Florida, Ritchey Vance got her necklace back.

Two significant IAF grants, in 1976 and 1983, each for more than \$700,000, helped FSJ equip an industrial school providing skills in carpentry, metalwork and other trades, and later create an agricultural community at Acandí, Chocó, on the north coast. "Javier realized he was graduating kids with high school diplomas who were driving taxis because of the lack of job opportunities. He decided to at

least get them some vocational training," Ritchey Vance observed. The IAF later awarded smaller grants totaling \$86,000 for travel and publications to share the approach in other countries, including the United States.

But hard on the heels of official recognition and international support came a tragic reminder of the violent world in which the program was operating. De Nicolás had acquired a house in El Cartucho, a notoriously dangerous zone in the Santa Inés neighborhood, and hired workmen to remodel it for the program. When he traveled to preach in the city of Medellín, he left one of the older street kids to look after the building. In his absence, the boy confronted some of the workmen who were stealing materials. They left, but later returned drunk and stabbed him to death, then burned his body. De Nicolás arrived in Bogotá to find fire engines still at the house. "A terrible thing," he recalled. "He'd been a street kid, and he loved the program. He was already in high school. And for being loyal to the program, they killed him. It affected me deeply." A few years later, one of de Nicolás's colleagues, Father Alfredo Gómez, drowned when waves in the Gulf of Urabá swamped the boat in which he was carrying supplies to the new agricultural training school in Acandí.

"There were a number of tragedies," Ritchey Vance said. "When you think of the world the boys came from—the world to which many of them returned—it's not surprising. I once estimated that about a quarter of the kids who entered the program eventually went back to the streets and the drugs." Despite the setbacks, the program kept expanding. Acandí was only one of the experiments in teaching urban street kids skills in agriculture, still a major component of the Colombian economy. It also functioned as therapy, a bucolic escape into a tropical wonderland of exotic plants and animals, where fruit fell from the trees—all of it almost a fantasy for kids from the thin air and chilly temperatures of Bogotá, 8,600 feet above sea level.

Other facilities offered technical training in large workshops stocked with industrial metal and wood lathes, table saws and drill presses. And always there were books to read, chess games, sports, music, art. Michael Shifter, who evaluated the program for the IAF in the mid-1980s, and who had taught

undergraduates at Harvard, considered Carlos Lara, a street kid who emerged as an impressive leader in de Nicolás's program and now helps direct it, the best-read 22-year-old he'd ever met. Each facility had a musical group. La Florida, the principal high school, had a symphony orchestra and many of its musicians traveled abroad to perform. Music, in fact, has always been one of the pillars of de Nicolás's educational approach. He believes it teaches discipline, teamwork, responsibility, cooperation—the fundamentals of getting ahead in society.

In its early years, the program was open only to boys, although three stowaways discovered on that train trip to the Caribbean coast turned out to be girls in disguise, which shocked de Nicolás when he learned of it. They were harbingers of what was to come. Many boys in the program had sisters and they urged de Nicolás to set up an educational program for girls, a plea echoed by de Nicolás's sister Dora, a nun who had moved to Colombia to work in a shelter for girls. The FSJ program that began serving girls in the mid-1980s was run by Dora de Nicolás until her death three years ago. The girls attended school, learned to play music, were encouraged to take up painting, ceramics and other arts, wearing uniforms they made themselves, identical in style and quality to those worn in expensive Catholic prep schools. Their uniforms, as well as the neat, clean shirts and slacks the boys wear, the light, airy spaces for study and work, the flowers everywhere, suggest a cornerstone of de Nicolás's design: Despite coming from the streets, these young people are as deserving of first-class treatment as any child of wealthy parents. "It's an environment that says: 'We value you, we trust you, we love you,'" Ritchey Vance pointed out. De Nicolás has a simple response when visitors note the taste and elegance of the facilities: "If you want first-class citizens," he says, "give them first-class treatment when they're growing up."

Encouraged by the success of his approach obvious to anyone in the radiant faces of the eager students, de Nicolás kept expanding the program. There were more daily shelters, more schools offering vocational as well as high school education, recreational retreats. De Nicolás didn't care much for looking back, collecting data, documenting the experience, a lack that even ardent supporters of the



Claudia Orjuela sewing a tablecloth.

program—like former street kid Leonardo Escobar who now directs a major USAID-funded project in Mexico—see as a missed opportunity. But de Nicolás's emphasis was always on reaching more and more kids. Funding and in-kind support, including land, buildings and equipment for the expanding program, came from government, individuals and corporations. The contributions seem considerable, but not when divided by the number of facilities, which eventually grew to more than 70, for the thousands of youths reached. Kids fed daily in 2006, when the program was at its most extensive, totaled about 10,000, de Nicolás calculated. Even when resources were abundant, de Nicolás stretched them with what he called his "science of doing big things with a little

money.” In addition to girls’ sewing skills, internal economies relied on the boys’ ability to construct and repair the facilities and grow food.

In recent years, the program has expanded to new homeless populations, especially to young adults with an overwhelming need for jobs. Many would say that by the time a boy growing up in severe poverty or on the streets reaches 17, his future is to a large extent determined. The Colombian label for many of these youths was *desechables*—disposables, throw-aways but de Nicolás saw possibilities. “It’s true,” he said, “that you see a lot of psychological damage in poor youths, because of the hard knocks and abuse they take. But life is a carrousel that comes around again and again, to offer opportunities. And for me,

that age, 17, has a good deal of potential. At 17, often the youth suddenly awakens, aware that he’s about to become an adult but has no education, no job, no family functioning as such, nothing that’s prepared him for the life that’s rushing toward him. It’s like when you arrive at the train and the doors are closed. And I’ll say to that youth, ‘You realize the train is leaving you behind, don’t you?’ And he responds, ‘Yes, Father, and that has me panicked.’

“So I’ll put him in a group, invite him to come every morning at 7 a.m., tell him I need to see if he really wants to learn. And I’ll put him in front of a computer. And he’ll get terribly enthusiastic as the math, the reading and writing from his three or four years of schooling finally begin to make sense. Next, we’ll emphasize personal grooming, dignity, helping others. When I see some progress, I go to businesses or city agencies and ask for jobs for these boys. They generally say, ‘Father, you’re going to ruin my business.’ But I convince them to take a chance and we put them to work on simple tasks cutting grass, filling potholes, fixing traffic signals. They get a regular paycheck, something they’ve never seen before. We help them find a small room they can afford. We still provide breakfast, and two days a week they come back for more training. It’s not hard to pick up many skills now. In the past to become a cabinetmaker was a long process, for example. Today all the pieces are prefabricated. It’s much easier.

“So, with five-month programs that you do again and again, you save a lot of people. We had begun with younger children, who needed a place to live. Older boys don’t need to be protected the same way. And the money we don’t spend on housing lets us reach many more. Some decide they want more than job training. And we move them to other programs. Sometimes they remind me of rockets that are spewing smoke, ready to take off.”

De Nicolás’s success with this program may have contributed to a rupture in the system he had built that straddled government and nongovernmental organizations. In 2008, after 39 years directing IDIPRON, he was asked to resign because of a complaint that, at age 80, he had surpassed by 15 years the mandatory retirement age for public employees. During those 15 years, through the administrations of several mayors, no one had raised a question, and



Youths from Bosconia repairing city streets.

there were suspicions that something more than compliance with the retirement rule was involved. Some influential business owners chafed at de Nicoló's success in getting government contracts that put the boys in his program to work. Five years later, those suspicions were rekindled when a scandal about city contracting touched some of those who'd played a role in forcing de Nicoló's departure. That retirement was one of several blows that came in quick succession: a diagnosis of cancer; the loss of his sister, Dora; and a financial shortfall that meant shifting resources around and closing far-flung installations like Acandí.

De Nicoló emerged from cancer therapy thinner but "like an oak," according to Carlos Lara. His departure from IDIPRON was the occasion for a whirlwind of celebrations of his career, many of

them parties, banquets and concerts with the boys and girls of the program. Multiple stories in the press recalled de Nicoló's career and the tens of thousands of youngsters he'd saved from the streets. And there were official tributes, from a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives to the Ordén de Boyacá, Colombia's highest honor, which then-president Álvaro Uribe personally pinned on the jacket of the beaming priest. Not that the honors meant de Nicoló was retiring. The IDIPRON connection was gone, but FSJ continues to operate programs all over Colombia. "I still have a lot to accomplish with the poor children in other cities," he told a Bogotá journalist.

Patrick Breslin, former IAF vice president for external affairs, retired after 22 years of service. He can be reached at patbreslin@yahoo.com



PARA EL CHACO FUTBOL ES ARTE



Gabriela Boyer

Soccer and Change in the *Conurbano*

By Jeremy Coon and Paula Durbin

"Soccer acts as the great socializer and initiates its adepts into the life of groups, organizations, and educational programs."

—Albert O. Hirschman, *Getting Ahead Collectively*

Hands down, soccer is the world's most popular sport and in Argentina it ranks as the national passion. Millions of Argentines play in thousands of clubs, cheered on by an enraptured following that includes Pope Francisco, the dues-paying member of San Lorenzo whose image is now emblazoned on the club's jersey. A source of civic pride is the pool of A-list talent recruited to play abroad, most famously Lionel Messi, consistently rated the world's best footballer today, and Diego Maradona, cited by many as the greatest player of all time.

Fabián Ferraro discovered his own gift for the beautiful game early, paid his dues on local feeder teams and soon had a few seasons in Europe on his resume. His career stopped short of the major leagues, but he would become one of the most recognizable figures in Argentine soccer—just not for scoring goals as a midfielder. In 1994, barely into his 20s, he was about to focus on a different goal, one that would lead him to discover how enthusiasm for a sport could develop into a dramatic exercise of grassroots engagement.

A corner in the *conurbano*

Small beginnings can lead to big things, and the beginnings of IAF grantee partner Defensores del Chaco were certainly inauspicious: 12 kids with time on their hands and nothing better to do than hang

out on a street corner in Chaco Chico, then considered one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the suburbs that coil around Buenos Aires proper to form the *conurbano*. "All we wanted to do was play soccer," said Maximiliano Pelayes, then just a little kid tagging along behind 14- and 15-year-olds whom adults in the barrio considered nothing but trouble.

Like them, Ferraro hails from the northwestern reaches of the *conurbano*—comprising the municipalities of San Miguel, Malvinas Argentinas and José C. Paz as well as Moreno, where Chaco Chico is located. Less than an hour's drive from the cosmopolitan veneer and apparent prosperity of downtown Buenos Aires, the *conurbano* was settled via decades of migration from the interior of Argentina and from Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay. Not surprisingly then, it reflects the ethnic mix of the country and the continent stretching beyond the city limits of the Argentine capital. Families in these northwestern municipalities are poor and barrios can be rough. Chaco Chico's serenity belies the bleakness of its past. In the 1990s, like most of the *conurbano*, it was battered by unemployment, dependent on public assistance, lacking basic services and infrastructure, and mired in the apathy and decay those conditions breed. "People in the community used to say that their children had no future," Ferraro said, "but they were talking about themselves."



Courtesy Defensores del Chaco

Defensores' complex.

Ferraro would often chat with the kids on the corner on his way to visit Julio Jiménez, a friend from school. They struck him, he recalled, as “essentially good kids, but without any support.” Maxi Pelayes offered more detail. “For better or for worse, they ran the neighborhood,” he said. “They got blamed for everything—fights, robberies, whatever happened here. They might not have been the perpetrators, but they were the usual suspects, the first the police would look for.” Although he insisted the kids never really “did anything,” he conceded that they ran a junior-grade protection racket, hustling “tolls” from passers-by. “We weren’t saints,” Pelayes admitted. “We understood that you solved problems with violence; that was the culture passed on to us by the role models we had then.”

The situation was all too familiar to Ferraro. Homeless at 7, he had survived by peddling on the commuter train into the city and sleeping in the station until his rescue by a railroad employee. Ferraro credits his adoptive father with encouraging him to stay in school and introducing him to soccer. A brother had been less fortunate and died a violent death as a gang member. Ferraro saw those kids on the same collision course toward recruitment as, he

said, “cheap labor for organized crime.” He talked to Jiménez, who also wanted to do something because he had a brother in the group. As a professional athlete, Ferraro enjoyed tremendous status in Chaco Chico, so they decided to engage the kids through soccer.

With no other place to play, they took the group from the corner into the street. The kids named themselves Defensores del Chaco in honor of the largest soccer stadium in Paraguay and of the ethnic origins of Chaco Chico. Their game attracted others, including many younger boys. “Suddenly, at 14 and 15, we were responsible for little kids whose parents left them with us,” Pelayes recalled. “We went from being seen as a danger to the community to being seen as a positive influence.”

Soccer field of dreams

Coached by Ferraro, the team eventually won the district championship and represented Moreno in the *torneos bonaerenses*, the regional tournament. “It was something huge because when people in Moreno identified with our uniform and our group, everything clicked,” Pelayes explained. “All of a sudden, we were known for this, not for what had gone on before. And that was the start of a dream to



Courtesy Fútbol para el Desarrollo

Defensores at the facility of Boca Juniors, one of Argentina's premier soccer clubs.

change this place." The kids began by taking over a lot that had become a dump, as often happens with abandoned property in the *conurbano*, where trash collection can be irregular or nonexistent. Ferraro encouraged the players to post a sign: *Coming Soon: Club Defensores del Chaco Sports Complex*. The neighbors scoffed, Pelayes recalled, but the kids stayed on course. "We began to clean up the property and we located the owner," he said. "He had inherited the land and assumed it had been taken over by squatters. He was grateful that we wanted to buy it. We didn't have to. But if we were going to bring about change, we needed to set an example." So the kids knocked on doors until they had enough to pay for the lot. "In 1999, we bought it, fenced it, set up the field, put in lights and began to build our complex," Pelayes said.

Ferraro had also begun to shift focus. "We had 12 kids, then 50, then 300, then 400 and the responsibility became enormous," he recalled. "It meant understanding what was going on around us." He, Jiménez and the other adults who had joined them as founding directors began to question the lack of infrastructure, basic services and public spaces in a neighborhood of 20,000 people, and the link to

hopelessness and delinquency was obvious. The six hours a week they spent with the soccer club seemed totally inadequate, given the dysfunction and neglect that everyone in Chaco Chico lived with around the clock. "We began to think about an action plan that went beyond soccer," Ferraro said. "We understood that we had to change the reality of this entire community. We had to have an organization with its doors open to community involvement, where people could come with their problems and find solutions."

Game change

The idea of a more inclusive institution started Ferraro thinking less about the young people who were enrolled in Defensores and more about those who were not—because they weren't fiercely competitive or blessed with talent or amenable to a training schedule or inclined to accept the authority of a referee or another reason that had nothing to do with their potential for leadership. And then there was the notable absence of girls, brought to Ferraro's attention by a collaborating organization in Bariloche. Soccer in Argentina has been a domain exclusive to men, where rabid fans can erupt in mayhem and women do not feel safe, let alone comfortable.

In 2000, Ferraro introduced *fútbol callejero*, or street soccer, aligning the game with Defensores' values. "The priorities are playing, sharing, respect, not winning," Ferraro explained. "It puts the joy back into soccer." *Fútbol callejero* calls for mixed teams that develop their own rules, do without a referee, instead elect a mediator, and base who wins on how the game is played—unheard-of notions that Defensores' players and the community initially resisted, especially the part about girls. "We had to get beyond the stereotype that women can't play," Pelayes explained. "We had to work on the men and it was hard but we got through it. Today in activities like *fútbol callejero*, the proportion of men to women

Marina Saieva



Street soccer, downtown Buenos Aires.

is about 60-40." Traditional soccer is still in the athletic program, but Defensores has been a force driving the spread of *fútbol callejero*.

In response to community demand, Defensores now has facilities for basketball, handball and volleyball as well as soccer; dressing rooms for both sexes; a cultural center; offices and rooms for workshops; a preschool; and a theater seating 250, the biggest public space in Chaco Chico, funded by IAF partner Fundación Arcor. Centro para Ayuda Legal Comunitario (CALC) operates out of an office on site, thanks to a grant from the World Bank's Development Marketplace to Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ), a public-interest law firm that Ferraro

brought to Chaco Chico in 2002. ACIJ attorneys assigned to CALC help with the legal obstacles as *conurbano* communities try to move forward. All this extends Defensores' reach well beyond the young people to whom it offers safety and structure. Collaborations with dozens of like-minded organizations—sometimes on a staggering scale—address the lack of services and infrastructure in Moreno and also San Miguel, Malvinas and José C. Paz, with a total population of 1.3 million.

Massive undertakings have originated with Culebrón Timbal, a cultural group headquartered in another neighborhood of Moreno. Directed by Eduardo Balán, a teacher, artist and musician, Culebrón offers some 300 young residents programs in art and music and uses popular culture to rally and transform communities over a broad territorial base. Signature expressions include the street art that decorates Defensores' complex; *la murga*, the musical theater that provides the soundtrack of the *conurbano*; and la Caravana, an annual festival and parade, credited with getting people out of their homes to take back the streets across four municipalities. "With the soccer ball and *la murga*, people began to get together and

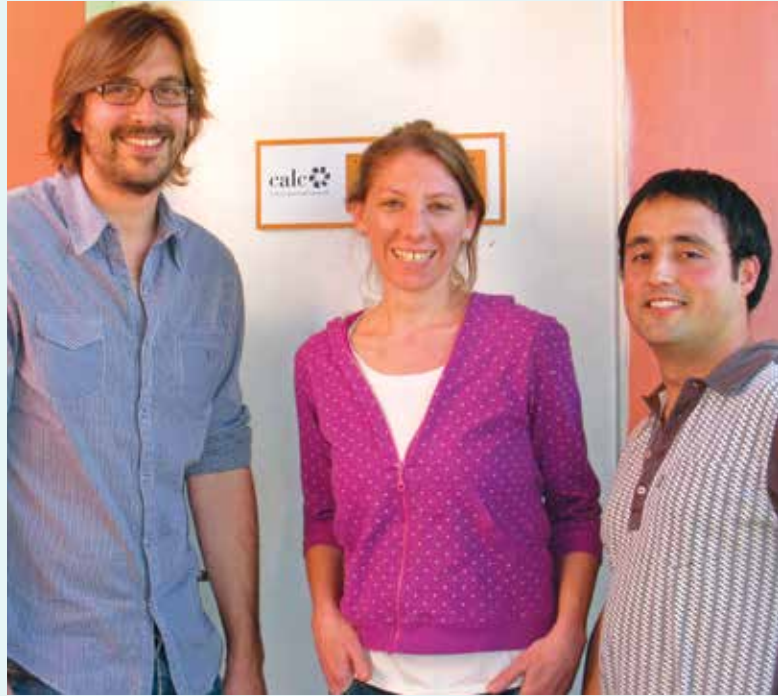
Mothers and Justice in El Vergel

El Vergel had to be the most forgotten corner of Moreno in 2003. Home to 150 families, the community had a single functioning institution: a rustic chapel that doubled as a soup kitchen. The closest school was three kilometers away. There were no sidewalks and no streetlights, which prevented night access by emergency vehicles and taxis. There were no government services other than mail delivery and the barest of health care: a medical team that would set up every two weeks in the chapel's limited space. Roads flooded with every rain, preventing school attendance, the medical team's visits and access by ambulances or the police, even in daylight, sometimes for months at a stretch. For pregnant women, a

delivery date during the winter wet season presented the terrifying prospect of trudging through mud and water in bitter cold, possibly in total darkness and often with small children in tow, to find transportation to the maternity ward.

A group of mothers decided that asphalt would solve the worst problems in El Vergel, and for years they tried to persuade the local government to pave the roads. Frustrated but unbroken, they appealed to the attorneys from ACIJ who had come to work on Defensores' site. The first meeting was tough. "The women barely spoke," recalled attorney Daniela Lovisolo. "It was hard to figure out what was on their mind."

With ACIJ's guidance, the mothers renewed negotiations with the authorities, a process that dragged out for five years. At one point boxes of rain boots arrived for the children, but the mothers weren't accepting band-aids. Instead they sued, in 2008, for paved roads and for a permanent clinic. After confirming conditions in El Vergel, the presiding judge ruled for El Vergel. Enforcing the court's order became the next challenge. The mothers decided to call attention to their plight by blocking traffic on a main artery, a common form of protest



Paula Durbin

Attorneys Sigal and Lovisolo with Maxi Pelayes.

in South America, but usually a last resort that carries the threat of arrest, denial of public assistance or loss of government-sponsored employment. Some 40 strong, they went to the highway, court order in hand, and, to their surprise, the police who arrived on the scene formed an escort. "We were on television," one recalled, "calmly pleading for our barrio."

Before long, the mayor of Moreno called on the mothers and the respective authorities to develop a work plan and a budget. "Within a year streets were paved, the clinic was operating daily, the neighborhood had been transformed," said attorney Martín Sigal, a founding director of ACIJ. "The very people who had been ignored decided where the asphalt should go, the schedule of vaccinations, when the pediatrician would visit." Most importantly, the women had learned to speak up. "Some went back to school, including some who couldn't read or write," Lovisolo said. "Eventually they set the agenda and attended the meetings with the mayor without us. They got the mayor's cell phone number and called him when work wasn't on schedule. Paving the streets changed lives in ways we hadn't planned for and can't measure. We can't take credit, but it happened."

petition the central, provincial and municipal government,” said Fernando Leguiza, one of Defensores’ founding directors. Important to this has been Balán’s tireless effort to assure that *conurbano* residents remain engaged on a daily basis with their communities. For many, the rewards have included connection to the electric grid and the gas line, garbage collection and access to public health services.

An IAF grant of \$228,300 awarded to Defensores in 2005 funded a tripartite project with Culebrón and ACIJ, currently an IAF grantee partner. A striking outcome (see page 15 for another) was the mobilization of 35 organizations—ranging from soccer clubs to soup kitchens—to bring participatory budgeting to San Miguel. This civic process has been unfolding throughout Latin America, as bureaucracies devolve responsibilities and resources to smaller units of government. Spearheaded by Culebrón, the effort began with the door-to-door distribution of educational materials and training for canvassers to survey the culture and deficiencies in each barrio. The results informed the draft of a Carta Popular, or Popular Charter, a proposal to improve democratic participation in San Miguel, so that every neighbor is heard. Disseminated via la Caravana for approval barrio by barrio, it became the basis for a city ordinance that San Miguel’s municipal council passed unanimously in 2008. The ordinance created barrio forums that receive a percentage of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure; the municipality offers training in the effective use of the process.

Coming off the bench

In 2008, toward the midpoint in the IAF’s funding, Ferraro formally withdrew from Defensores, taking the other founders with him. “Our intention had



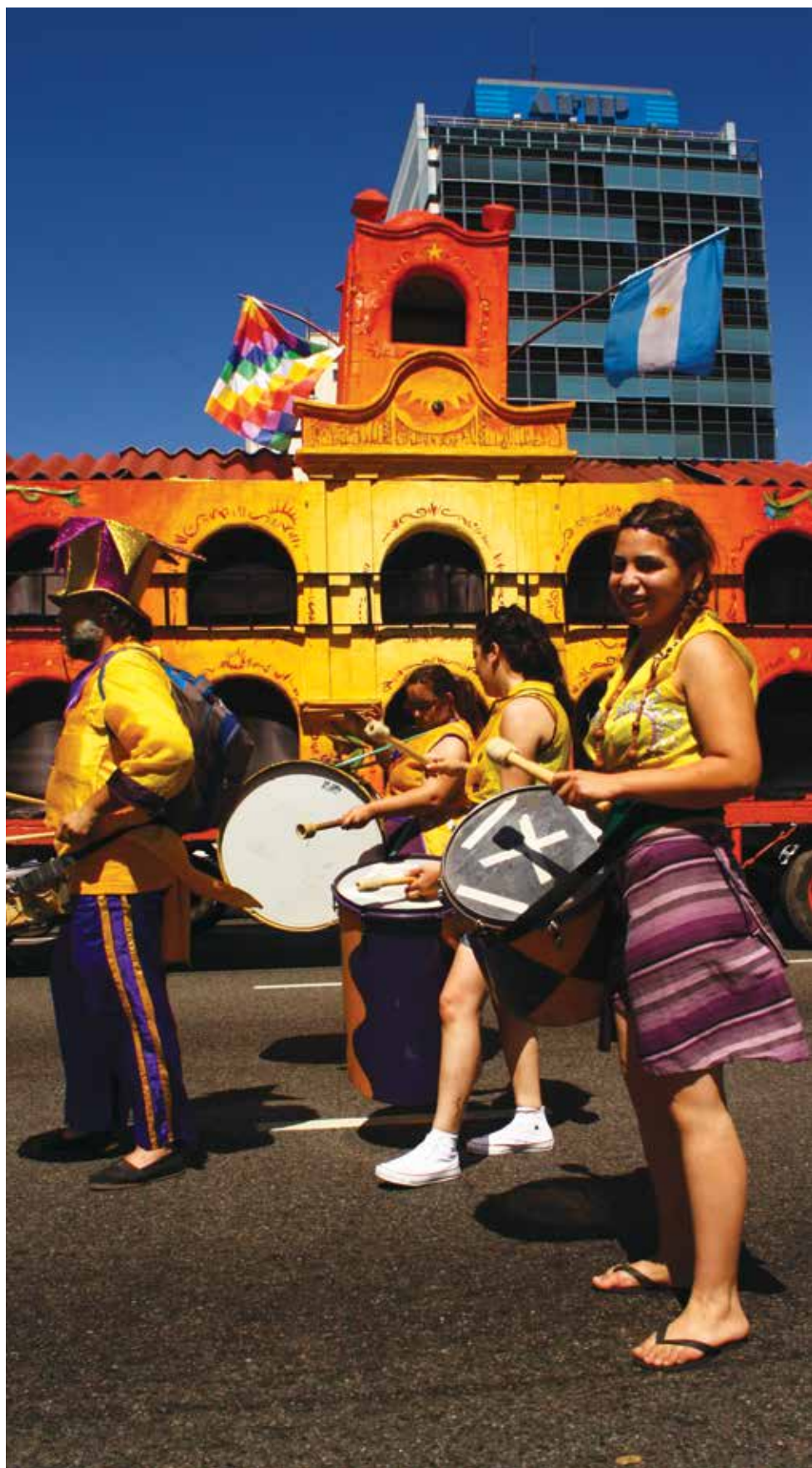
“Participatory budgeting—everyone’s accomplishment.”

always been that Defensores be run by young people for young people,” he explained, citing the by-laws that require directors of the athletic club and cultural center be under 30. Ferraro was then 36; the others had also aged out. Maxi Pelayes, 23 and about to become the first university graduate in his family, succeeded Ferraro as general director. He currently



Courtesy Culebrón Timbal

Culebrón Timbal informs conurbano residents of the advantages of civic participation via its annual Caravana featuring murga ensembles and numerous floats, right, and other popular gatherings, including concerts by its rock ensemble starring director Eduardo Balán, upper left.





oversees programs in sports, culture, education and community development involving 95 employees and volunteers; 1,700 dues-paying residents of the *conurbano*, ranging in age from 3 to over 60, take advantage of Defensores' facilities. The youngest attend the preschool that the new leadership built and that triggered Ferraro's departure.

The plea for a preschool had come from a group of desperate mothers whose children were among 400 turned away from the overflowing public kindergarten serving seven neighborhoods. Why, they asked,

Paula Durbin



Maxi Pelayes on the playground at Defensores' preschool; right and below, preschoolers in class.

Courtesy Defensores del Chaco



couldn't Defensores open a school? The idea excited the young men who had grown up with the club, but the founding directors turned the mothers down, citing the difficulty of obtaining permits and financing. The real reason, Ferraro admitted to himself, was that he and his colleagues had become comfortable and no longer had the energy for such a challenge.

"It was like looking in the mirror," he said of the revelation. "And we realized that the young people we had developed were capable of leading, but we weren't getting out of their way. We adults had become an obstacle. So in three months we were gone." The new leadership convinced the state-owned energy corporation YPF, Fundación Navarro-Viola and other Argentine donors to fund the preschool. Licensing, however, threatened to be the nightmare Ferraro had dreaded. Suspicious of the new directors' youth, and of the light and airy classrooms, the authorities initially declared the gleaming new facility illegal. Eventually it passed inspection and opened in 2009. Parents pay modest tuition, in kind if they can't afford cash, and operations are subsidized by Defensores' sports programs. "It's a first-class preschool," Ferraro said. "And we couldn't have done it."

Next moves

Profiles in the press and on the Web sites of various organizations confirm Ferraro's relentless promotion of the power of soccer as a vehicle for social change. "In every neighborhood you'll find an elementary school, a church, a clinic and the soccer club," he told *Grassroots Development*. "On a weekend, it's the soccer game that becomes the meeting place. It's a citizenship school without walls." Defensores has inspired dozens of new clubs, and with them in mind, Ferraro founded Fútbol para el Desarrollo (FuDe). Through it, new organizers benefit from Defensores' experience and learn to keep their eye on the ball. "People form these groups with the idea of winning games instead of working together. They want to replicate a professional model, to develop a Messi for a scout to recruit," Ferraro said, "but the idea is to use football as an excuse to mobilize the community for development." Out of FuDe emerged Fútbol para la Oportunidad Social, or Liga FOS, a network of 18 grassroots clubs that stay in touch by playing each other and provide services, such as healthcare, for young people ages 7 to

18. Families are welcome at the games and the public is asked to leave alcohol at home.

FuDe coordinates *fútbol callejero* activities for some 200,000 players in Latin America, according to a recent interview in the Argentine daily *Clarín*. Ferraro is credited with introducing the game in Paraguay and in Uruguay, where former IAF grantee partner Mundo Afro uses soccer to reach African descendent youths with its message on heritage, participation and voting. Chile, Costa Rica and Peru have programs. So does Ecuador. Athletes with former IAF grantee Ser Paz, which disarmed some 5,000 gang members in Guayaquil, Ferraro said, play at night to show that they have taken back the streets. Teams throughout the hemisphere meet in international matches and the first two games always take place in the street. *Fútbol callejero* teams are scheduled to meet in Brazil in 2014 and play parallel to the World Cup. "Our dream is to play on Avenida Paulista," Ferraro said.

As shared open space, the street has been central to his concept of resilient communities, dating back to that first game with the kids on the corner. By scheduling games in the streets, he insists, *fútbol callejero* makes them safer. "The great problem with security in Latin America can be traced to its citizens' abandonment of the streets," he explained. "I played in the street when I was young and nothing bad ever happened. People would pull their chairs onto the sidewalk to drink their *mate*. The street was an extension of our homes. Neighbors watched out for each other. *Fútbol callejero* resurrects that idea and reclaims public spaces for everyone to use. When there are people in the streets, you don't need a security force."

After so many years spent listening to and advocating for communities, Ferraro ran for mayor of Moreno in 2011, on the Moreno Vivo ticket, the party he helped found, and he came in second. In an interview with *Grassroots Development* he announced his intention to run again in 2015. Ferraro is also still active in Fundación Defensores del Chaco, the club's fundraising arm. In June, he took time out from his busy schedule to celebrate the reopening of Defensores' theater, which had been destroyed during the storms of April 2012. After the weather cleared, club members spent three days searching for zinc roofing and other salvageable materials, some



Representatives of the Uruguayan government, the municipality and program sponsor Mundo Afro opened the 2012 championships of Red Sudamericana de Fútbol Callejero held in Montevideo. Post-game activities always offer athletes an opportunity to discuss community issues with the officials present. Below, players from Defensores and other teams in a photo op.

Courtesy Defensores del Chaco



found hundreds of meters from where the theater had stood. To pay for the reconstruction, members organized a banquet and appealed to the neighbors, just as they had some 15 years ago. The difference was that their complex had become a bricks-and-mortar landmark, the pride of the barrio, not a dream. Streets in Chaco Chico might not have signs, but anyone in Moreno can direct a lost driver to Defensores del Chaco.

Ferraro praised the young people for doing the job so quickly, pointing out that the municipality, with more extensive resources, has still not installed streetlights in the neighborhood. There were shout-outs, including for the directors. Some are approaching 30, including Maxi Pelayes, who assured *Grassroots Development* that the next generation of leaders already participates in decisions. Renovation at the top is another constant theme for Ferraro. “We have always criticized staying in power. We believe that the exercise of democracy requires change,” he explained. “We are betting on change.” Cascading levels of responsibility have been built into the organization, and new leaders are being trained all the time. Pelayes expects his successors to expand the preschool to include more grades and add a pool to the sports complex.

The organization that sprang from a street corner turned energy and hope into a vibrant institution that continues to grow. “To be honest, the beginning was not something we thought out,” Ferraro insisted. But if there was no strategic plan, there was a strategic vision, and he is modest about taking credit for where it has led. “I see kids on the street with Defensores’ jerseys,” he said. “Shops here don’t stock the jerseys of the First Division teams; Chaco Chico identifies with this institution. What Defensores accomplished was that a community of 20,000 inhabitants began to think in ‘green



Fabián Ferraro at the celebration of the opening of Defensores’ theater after its reconstruction because of severe damage from storms.

and black,’ and that a community seen as violent became seen as an example. Defensores had something to do with this cultural change, but it wasn’t the work of one or two people, it was the work of the community.”

Jeremy Coon is the IAF representative for Argentina and Paraguay. Adriana Rofman, IAF data technician in Argentina; Gabriela Sbarra, IAF liaison in Argentina; Gabriela Boyer, former representative for Argentina; and Eduardo Rodríguez-Frías contributed to this article.



Hope amid Danger in Honduras: Education, Employment and New Enterprises

By John Reed

All photos by Mark Caicedo

Honduras was the deadliest country in the hemisphere last year, with 96 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. The murder rate was even worse in Tegucigalpa, the capital, which now has a municipally-funded program that helps indigent families pay for burials. The grim statistics are driven in part by a teeming, home-grown gang population, thought to outnumber the police force and be better armed, that has regularly assaulted buses, levied an *impuesto de guerra*, or war tax, on small businesses and conducted a lucrative traffic in narcotics, weapons and human beings. Former U.S. Ambassador Hugo Llorens called the crime wave a tsunami. To paraphrase a colleague, the extreme poverty is face to face with tempting opportunities for the poor to become rich overnight, although that might mean death tomorrow.

On May 28, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18 (M-18), both gangs with a presence in the United States, Guatemala and El Salvador, announced plans for a nationwide ceasefire in Honduras. Brokered by Catholic clerics and the Organization of American States, the arrangement has a precedent in El Salvador, where murders have dropped dramatically since the declaration of a truce last year, but illicit businesses still thrive. In that context, the Honduran gangs' call for vocational training was something of a surprise. "I want my son to be a doctor or a cameraman, not a gangster," said a spokesman for MS-13, identified only as Marco, during a press conference held inside the prison where he is confined.

As *Grassroots Development* went into production, the effects of a truce were not yet evident, and some experts were skeptical about the prospects in Honduras, where the police factor into the violence and so does the presence of the international cartels

transporting much of the cocaine that stocks the U.S. market. But no one harbors any doubts about the need for job training.

Along with poverty, the absence of educational facilities at every level is a major force behind the criminal activity, said Will Aguilar, executive director of IAF grantee partner Grupo Juvenil Dion (GJD), a nongovernmental organization in Tegucigalpa that teaches marketable skills and helps its graduates lead productive lives. In a region desperate for tested models that give young people hope and keep them away from gangs, guns, drugs and prostitution, GJD has a sterling reputation for effectiveness. Visitors arrive in a steady stream, hoping to replicate its success, including in Guatemala and El Salvador, which, with Honduras, make up the "Northern triangle," considered the hub for crime in Central America.

GJD's facility resides in La Pedregal, one of Tegucigalpa's poorest and most densely-packed neighborhoods. Its students are hardworking, solid citizens. GJD's teachers have put their lives on the line to fend off thugs intent on dragging a trainee out of school for reasons as inconsequential as wearing the wrong soccer jersey. In the 1970s, when a young nun, Marta Dion, joined other colleagues from Canada to work in the slums of Tegucigalpa, residents of La Pedregal were so underserved that some had to get their water from the polluted river nearby and no place offered food for sale. Operating out of La Pedregal's Church of San José Labrador, Sor Marta founded an organization that brought piped water to the community and an outlet selling food at affordable prices. She also introduced the idea of basic and vocational education to local youths, got an enthusiastic response and adopted that as a primary focus. Before leaving San José Labrador,

she legally incorporated the organization and developed its governing body of La Pedregal residents, including students and graduates. It was this general assembly that decided to honor Sor Marta by naming the organization after her.

Currently GJD offers more than 450 students, age 14 and above, the opportunity to master the skills to work in electrical repairs, carpentry, baking, tailoring, salon services and information technology. They also learn math, Spanish, science and history, the subjects constituting a core education, as defined by the Honduran government, which certifies the graduates. Complementing the curriculum are an annual music fair and field trips to attend plays, concerts and art exhibits. Trainees give back to the community by applying their skills in schools and health clinics—repairing furniture and lighting, giving haircuts or baking a cake for a monthly birthday celebration. Internships offer a practical component to the training. A placement program helped 56 of its 152 graduates find jobs in 2012; GJD does not have a system for tracking those who find employment on their own.

Aguilar, a trained accountant, has led GJD for the past 13 years but his association dates back to age five, when GJD still functioned more as a community center and his older brothers took him there to socialize with other children. He and his family stayed on in La Pedregal, where the Colonia Supermarket and the Mexican retail chain Elektra are among the businesses now doing a brisk trade and the cacophony of smaller enterprises fills the main thoroughfares as well as serpentine back streets and alleys. Several establishments owe their existence to GJD, which has added enterprise development to a



Ana Graciela Hernández, tailor in training.



Carpentry student Jeison Andrés Rivas.

vision that has put it and Aguilar in the vanguard of education in Central America. GDJ's records indicate that 25 percent of the graduates of its vocational training start businesses. To date, out of every 10 businesses started, seven are going concerns a year later.

Since the mid-1990s, the IAF has awarded GJD four grants totaling \$500,000, the first of which funded a building where training takes place. More recently, the IAF has supported innovations introduced by Aguilar to help its graduates' businesses, including a loan program financing their start-ups. "It's almost impossible for young people in this country to access microcredit as neither they nor their families can provide the required collateral and they are stigmatized by the knee-jerk association of young people with *maras* and narcotraffic," he explained. "That's why GJD believes it should fill the credit gap."

Aguilar also developed a business incubator that provided temporary space to get the new enterprises off the ground before they located to a permanent site. Predictably, demand far exceeded the space available, so Aguilar turned the incubator into a marketing center where graduates now display their products and customers can place orders. At his urging, a student group formed to conduct surveys that guide new ideas. Aguilar plans to use GJD's latest funding for a store staffed by teachers and students and stocked with supplies for resale to graduates at a price point between wholesale and retail. Looming on the horizon are courses in repairing electronic auto components and in the skills that qualify students to work in call centers.

For the past three years, GJD has offered training to students in the outlying provinces of Francisco



Fátima Raquel Coello, GJD mobile workshop in salon services, San José del Potrero, Comayagua.



Aspiring bakers Lilian Cristina Vallecillo and Estafaní Jaquelin Cabrera.

Morazán, Intibucá and Yoro, following the example developed by Colombia's Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA). While SENA's *aulas móviles*, or mobile classrooms, function in outfitted campers and buses, GJD instead transports the equipment to a semi-permanent site. Core features of its mobile workshops are the community's choice of content—so far, baking, salon services and carpentry—and commitment to contributing counterpart in kind—space for training, watchmen or paying the electric bill. Once trained, these participants too can receive loans for equipment and supplies toward start-ups.

Financial sustainability has been a goal since GJD was founded, an elusive one for an NGO providing services to marginalized youths from some of the hemisphere's most depressed communities. Modest tuition offsets some costs of operation as do revenues from items produced in class, and GJD's outlet is expected to yield some income. Another source of income, Aguilar hopes, may be the development of products in the training programs; currently a shampoo and a donut mix are sold under GJD brand names. Meanwhile international donors continue to provide a lifeline, including Microsoft whose gift of software worth \$200,000 was a boon to GJD. In any case, donors are likely to continue to be necessary for programs like GJD's—programs that *The Washington Post* in an editorial on the prospect of a truce in Honduras, called "worthy of congressional support."

Gangs have had La Pedregal in a chokehold and GJD has had to work to keep its foothold and its focus. "Any attempt to reduce the level of violence in this country is worth trying," Aguilar commented on the proposed truce. "And there has to be serious investment in prevention. Here is where Grupo Juvenil Dion can play a role. GJD has fought this



Fany Dubón started a business after learning to bake in a mobile workshop.

scourge with economic and social opportunities, so our young people have the tools for a future free of poverty and crime." In other words, the same future that Marco claimed Honduran gang members now want.

John Reed is the IAF representative for Honduras.



Sem terrinha at school in a settlement of landless workers.

Landless Workers and Schools: An Alternative Approach to Rural Education

By Rebecca Tarlau

All photos by Rebecca Tarlau

On the outside walls of a rural public school in Brazil, in the northern state of Pará, an unlikely set of images is painted: the Brazilian flag, the logo of the local municipal government, and the flag of one of the largest social mobilizations in Latin America, the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)—the landless workers’ movement that has been a thorn in the side of

the Brazilian state for almost 30 years. Alongside these symbols is written, “*Reforma Agrária para Justiça Social e Soberania Popular*” [Agrarian Reform for Social Justice and Popular Sovereignty]. This school is representative of an apparent contradiction occurring throughout rural Brazil: the active coordination between the government and the MST for the provision of public education.

But while bureaucrats in many states and municipalities are working cooperatively with MST activists, in other regions the official response is drastically different. Based on 17 months of ethnographic field research in three regions of Brazil, I analyze the conditions under which states cede power over education policy to social movements. Data come from 70 interviews with MST activists, 60 interviews with elected officials and government bureaucrats, extensive field notes, informal conversations, site visits, school observations, teacher training and shadowing MST activists.

Background

The MST consists of more than 1 million women, men and children who have decided to combat their poverty by pressuring the government to give them land to farm (Branford and Rocha 2002; Wright and Wolford 2003; Ondetti 2008; Wolford 2010). It emerged in the late 1970s, during the Abertura, or opening, that paved the way for the end of military dictatorship in 1985 (Skidmore 2010). During the decades of military rule, rapid economic growth and industrialization coincided with massive migration from rural to urban areas. In 1940, less than 32 percent of all Brazilians lived in cities; 75 percent of the total population was urban by 1991 (Plank 1996). For Brazilians who remained in rural areas, hunger and malnutrition increased as the government pushed many owners off their small holdings to make more room for mechanized agricultural industries (Wright and Wolford 2003).

Farmers in Southern Brazil began to contest these inequities by occupying large estates that had been left fallow and pressuring the government to give them the land. They based their claim on a clause in the Brazilian constitution specifying that land has to “serve its social function,” which they interpreted as mandating that ownership of unproductive land must be transferred to someone who would make it productive. In 1984, disparate groups from the South came together to found a national movement that has since expanded to 23 states. Since the first occupations in the early 1980s, the MST has succeeded in obtaining title to 20 million acres for 350,000 families (Wright and Wolford 2003).

This success has made the MST famous around the world. Less well known is the movement’s simultaneous struggle for the right to free primary,

secondary and tertiary education for all children, youths and adults living in MST communities. In the Brazilian countryside, families often have limited access to schools. Where rural education is provided, school systems are frequently dysfunctional due to minimal resources and lack of administrative support (Plank 1996; Reimers 2000; Schwartzman and Brock 2004). Over the past three decades, the MST has successfully pressured state and local governments to build 2,000 new rural public schools that currently serve approximately 200,000 students (Movimento Sem Terra 2009). The MST has also set up education collectives that work with local governments to coordinate teachers, students and community members in their effort to improve schools.

These collectives advocate for a range of goals. Activists teach students the importance of farming as well as studying and encourage cooperative forms of work and holistic learning. They envision schools as democratic spaces, where parents, teachers and students decide together how education should function. They want teachers to help students analyze contemporary and historical inequities in their communities, so the students can help transform these conditions. By applying these curricular and organizational principles, MST activists are trying to create an educational system that encourages young Brazilians to stay in the countryside and become farmer-intellectuals. This educational goal is connected to the MST’s larger vision of workers who own the means of production and farm together in sustainable communities.

The roots of the educational approach

While I was in the Southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, I was told I had to talk with Salete, a woman known as the “first teacher in the MST,” who currently runs an alternative high school. In 1978, Salete met Father Anildo, a proponent of liberation theology (Berryman 1987), who invited her to participate in a Comunidade Eclesial de Base, an informal religious and political study group. Salete eventually decided to participate in a land occupation in 1981. Then 27, and the only person in the encampment with a teaching degree, she began to work with the young people, applying ideas from Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) that

she had learned through her earlier work with the Catholic Church.

Salete was officially granted the land she was occupying in 1984. A year later, another land occupation occurred, with thousands of families participating. Salete started traveling to the new encampment and organizing educational activities for the hundreds of children living in squatter tents. The occupation included 11 people with teaching certificates and they began to work with Salete to develop an alternative approach to education. Between 1985 and 1986, groups of educators from several settlements and camps discussed a more cohesive approach for the entire movement. The first nationwide meeting of MST educators occurred in 1987; participants agreed on the need to train teachers who would convey the movement's history and value the struggle for agrarian reform.

In 1990, the MST began training teachers in Braga, Rio Grande do Sul, in coordination with the municipal government. These courses allowed activists to earn their high school diploma simultaneously with a teaching certificate. Five years later, the MST founded an institution that became accredited by the state government as a private high school: Instituto de Educação Josué de Castro (IEJC), named for the activist-author who wrote *The Geopolitics of Hunger*. More than 3,000 MST activists from throughout Brazil have graduated from IEJC since its founding. In 1998, the federal government created the Programa Nacional da Educação na Reforma Agrária (PRONERA), which gave the MST an additional source of funding for educational initiatives.

Activists wanted access to higher education as well and in the late 1990s approached dozens of universities on the development of a degree program specifically for MST communities. Only one small private university, located in city of Ijuí, Rio Grande do Sul, was interested. Together MST activists and these university professors designed an undergraduate degree program, "Pedagogy of Land," which was funded by PRONERA and incorporated the approach to education that the MST had developed over the previous decade. Tailored to residents of communities settled as a result of land reform, it attracted activists from across the country when it was launched in 1998. Since then, more than 40 public universities

have partnered with the MST and PRONERA to offer undergraduate programs for residents of similarly settled areas. These include the Federal Universities of Pernambuco, Rio De Janeiro, Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí, Pará, Maranhão, Brasília, Espírito Santo, Ceará, Acre, Sergipe, Minas Gerias, Goiás, Paraíba and Bahía, among others.

MST initiatives across regions

Although the MST's educational initiatives—known as Educação do Campo—are amply supported by several federal laws and a presidential decree, Brazil's decentralized system has not consistently adopted them. My research shows that where they have been put into practice, the state bureaucratic apparatus is strong and has sufficient material resources and expertise. Another condition that favored adoption of the approach is intense mobilization by the MST movement that brings a sympathetic administration into office. For example, after the MST's massive mobilization in support of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) in Rio Grande do Sul in 1998, the administration that took office responded by constructing and accrediting public schools, known as Escolas Itinerantes, or itinerant schools, in the MST's encampments (Camini 2009). The administration allowed MST activists to participate in defining the organizational structure of these schools because the MST's educational, political and economic goals aligned with the PT's. This is consistent with findings of other scholars, who also argue that committed public officials are critical to the cultivation of state-society synergy (Goldfrank 2011; Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Ostrom 1996; Abers 2000; Heller 1999; Fox 1996).

Such an arrangement can abruptly end, as it did in Rio Grande Sul in 2007 when a new governor took office and vigorously campaigned against MST educational activities. Within four years the administration closed all schools located in MST camps, in addition to more than 150 other rural schools across the state. This administration's discourse directly contradicted the movement's position that schools should be located in the countryside and that the curriculum should reflect sensitivity to the needs of rural populations. "It is the destiny of the world for rural populations to migrate to the cities," the then-secretary of education told me



Sem terrinha protesting the closure of MST schools in communities in Rio Grande do Sul.

during an interview in 2010, “which is why we need schools in urban centers.”

In contrast to this case, my research in the Northeast showed that partnerships between the state and civil society can develop in locations where state capacity is limited and the administration is ambivalent toward the MST. In the municipality of Santa Maria da Boa Vista, in the state of Pernambuco, mayors who otherwise might not espouse the movement’s ideology have supported the MST’s educational program for over a decade. One reason for this is that they consider the MST more capable of organizing schools than the government itself, and perceive MST involvement as a benefit to the municipality.

Many teachers interviewed said that the presence of MST activists in rural schools was a huge improvement over the total isolation they had previously experienced and they have communicated the merits of the MST’s approach to the municipal government. Finally, mayors in Santa Maria da Boa Vista solidify their political base through direct benefits, to citizens. This clientelism (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007) can facilitate MST participation because mayors don’t run on platforms ideologically opposed to the movement. Collaboration in Santa Maria da Boa Vista illustrates that active coordination between local government officials and a contentious social movement can develop in contexts where it might not be expected.



Teachers from the municipality of Santa Maria da Boa Vista assigned to MST settlements.

Conclusion

The “state” is not a “united, single, competent, coherent or necessarily capable actor” (Yashar 2005), and the relationship between MST activists and government officials differs across Brazil. In some locations it is complementary and synergistic, in others, antagonistic. MST activists have succeeded in institutionalizing their approach through laws, a presidential decree and an office in the Ministry of Education that works directly with rural social movements. However, the MST’s ability to transform public education still depends on negotiations with hundreds of state and municipal governments. Local political and economic conditions affect how this transformation unfolds.

When the MST emerged in the early 1980s, the rural school system was marginalized and curriculum was determined by the middle-class assumption that all children needed to learn the same content. Just as they continued to struggle for land reform

over the past three decades, MST activists pushed for educational innovation in the countryside, undaunted by the barriers. They brought into the Brazilian consciousness their own distinct approach to education. That approach advances a curriculum that values rural livelihoods, teaches the history of agrarian reform and emphasizes collective production. It also entails a radical reconfiguration of the traditional hierarchy of communities, students, teachers, principals and officials. An understanding of the conditions that allow for or prevent the MST’s transformation of the public schools—and the implications going forward—is critical for scholars and development professionals concerned with education, participatory governance and alternative models for rural development.

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Rebecca Tarlau, sem terra settlement, Pernambuco.

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Bonding or Bridging Ties? Social Relations and Indigenous Activism in Peruvian Amazonia

By Danny Pinedo

On the morning of June 5, 2009, Peruvians awoke to the shocking news of a massacre that had claimed the lives of 34 people near the northern city of Bagua. The violence erupted two months after thousands of Awajún and Wampís Indians, supported by mestizo farmers, had begun blockading a highway, demanding the repeal of decrees issued in 2008 by President Alan García to facilitate corporate access to indigenous lands and resources in the Peruvian Amazon. The unrest had spread. In Madre de Dios, the Federación Nativa del Río Madre de Dios y Afluentes [Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and its Tributaries] (FENAMAD) organized several strikes in support of these demands. While the area has a history of indigenous insurgency, the uprising culminating in the tragedy of Bagua seemed to mark the emergence of Amazonian peoples as a pivotal force on Peru's political landscape (Rénique 2009).

The infamous events in Bagua aroused my interest in the role of social relationships and the resulting ties and networks in mobilizing thousands of indigenous Amazonians. These networks have been based primarily on Amazonian alliances with Andean indigenous peoples and a range of nonindigenous partners. Before 2009, the last successful Andean-Amazonian alliance dated back to the mid-1700s, when Juan Santos Atahualpa, an Inca descendant, led the Asháninka people of the central Peruvian Amazon in a rebellion against the Spanish. Since then, attempts at collaboration have been undermined by cultural perceptions stemming from the intrusion of Andean peoples into the Amazonians' territory (Rénique 2009). It was not until the 2009 Amazonian uprising that networks took on greater

importance for indigenous mobilization. What kinds of social ties underlie these networks? How do they facilitate mobilization to secure land rights and economic resources? Scholars contend that social networks within discrete kin and ethnic groups, called bonding ties, lead to fragmentation, while networks of unrelated people or distinct ethnic groups, called bridging ties, lead to social cohesion (Narayan 1999). Sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973) calls the former "strong ties," as they create emotional attachments based on kinship and ethnicity, and the latter "weak ties," as they refer to the loosely knit relationships beyond the immediate circle of family and ethnic group. Granovetter sees "weak ties" as essential to economic opportunities for individuals and to their integration into larger communities.

Kin, *compadres* and the gold rush

In 2011, I arrived in the department of Madre de Dios, in the southeastern Peruvian Amazon, for some 15 months of dissertation research in Puerto Maldonado, the regional capital, where FENAMAD is headquartered, and in the Harakmbut community of Puerto Luz, a FENAMAD constituent. The Harakmbut, who constitute the largest indigenous group in the region, are spread along the banks of the upper Madre de Dios River and several tributaries. Like other indigenous Amazonians, they live from gardening, fishing, hunting and gathering. As the river basin is rich in gold deposits, gold mining has been a source of income for most Harakmbut since the early 1970s.

Changes to Peruvian law in the late 1970s suspended the central government's exclusive control of the extraction and sale of gold. That, and the rise in the international price of gold in the early 1980s, attracted corporations and thousands of impover-

ished Andean farmers to territories claimed by the Harakmbut. Most mining companies and settlers ignored the Law of Native Communities, enacted in 1974 during the administration of General Juan Velasco, which enabled the Harakmbut to obtain clear title to their land by the mid-1980s. Reforms intended to promote private investment in the oil industry in the early 1990s spurred an increase in oil concessions, which some call “the new Amazon boom.” As land titles do not convey rights to minerals beneath the surface, and as many oil concessions overlap indigenous lands in Madre de Dios, the boom resulted in conflict with native communities. The Harakmbut mobilized to defend their lands and livelihoods, a process in which bonding and bridging ties have played different, sometimes contradictory, roles.

Among the Harakmbut, the patrilineal clan, whose members trace descent through the father's

line, is a primary source of identity, reciprocity and solidarity. In Puerto Luz, clan members tend to live in close proximity, forming clusters of households. They regard themselves as sharing a common ancestor and as obligated to help each other (Gray 1997b; Moore 1975). In a dispute between members of different clans, a man is expected to support those who belong to his clan, regardless of who is right (Moore 1975). Bonds among clan members are reinforced through generalized reciprocal relationships. When, for example, a woman distributes meat that her husband has brought home, she privileges the spouses of men in her husband's clan (Moore 1975). Kinship, however, does not create bonds among all members of a community, as reciprocity with people beyond the cluster of households is nearly nonexistent. Even routine socializing is confined to family gatherings involving residents of the same cluster. Activities



Stéphanie Borios

Danny Pinedo and a Harakmbut elder.

that bring together all residents are limited to community meetings, celebrations of the community's anniversary and, sometimes, fishing with the poison plant barbasco. Even then participants tend to sit, chat and drink based on kinship. Communal labor is rather rare.

Clans have been essential to community mobilization. Heads of household easily mobilize kinsmen in their clusters, where proximity makes communication easier and faster. Members of all clans and clusters of Puerto Luz have coalesced to confront the encroachment of miners on their lands. In 2003, for example, men, women and even elders and children rallied with bows and arrows to throw Andean intruders off the lands where the Harakmbut hunted and gathered. Such solidarity endures as long as the common threat and does not provide a basis for inter-community alliances.

Social ties with Andean and mestizo settlers may benefit individuals but not the community. Individual Harakmbut have engaged settlers in friendship and in *compadrazgo*, the relationship between a parent and a godparent. In some communities, residents have

allowed settlers to mine gold in exchange for *regalía*, or rent, and the settlers have become *invitados*. For the Harakmbut, rent has become a source of cash. Over time, some have saved enough to purchase their own mining equipment and have become less dependent upon *invitados*, but others have continued to rely on *regalías* for cash. When, fearful of losing their lands, the Harakmbut of Puerto Luz decided to expel *invitados* from their territory, those with ties of friendship and *compadrazgo* rejected the idea. Clearly, personal feelings clashed with the interests of the community.

Friends, communities and federations

My research confirms that ties to nonindigenous individuals and organizations, including international donors, have facilitated indigenous mobilization and have been essential to obtaining title to land and undertaking development projects. As the threat posed by miners and corporations grew, so did the need for an indigenous federation, one capable of defending indigenous possession and control of land, which the Harakmbut lacked the experience and funding necessary to launch. They obtained the technical and



Danny Pinedo

Gold miners, Karene River, Puerto Luz.

financial support needed to found FENAMAD in 1982 by entering into durable collaborations with Peruvian and foreign anthropologists who had conducted research among Harakmbut communities. A local non-governmental organization facilitated contact with the Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDSEP), an umbrella organization grouping most regional indigenous federations, which sent a representative to help organize FENAMAD (Moore 1985). NGOs also assisted with registration and the definition of boundaries, enabling several settlements to qualify officially as “native communities” and receive title to land (Gray 1997a).

Ethnic divisions, however, have been a recurring source of internal conflict. FENAMAD was mainly an initiative of Harakmbut communities (Gray 1997a). But the Harakmbut number between 1,500 and 2,000 individuals, a population too small to constitute a political force locally. For this reason, FENAMAD leaders wanted to incorporate all ethnic groups in the region, but this has not been easy, given a history of rivalry and conflict. Even members of the Harakmbut communities of Puerto Luz and San José del Karene, for example, may treat each other with suspicion and disdain. In precontact times, Harakmbut groups lived in permanent conflict. This persisted into the 1950s, when Dominican missionaries made contact with the last Harakmbut group to remain isolated from outsiders and persuaded its members to settle in the missions of Palotoa and Shintuya, along the Upper Madre de Dios, and convert to Christianity. At first, the Harakmbut appreciated the availability of metal knives, machetes and cooking pots as well as Western medical care. But in the late 1960s, tensions arising out of accusations of sorcery and competition for gifts from the mission and for the few marriageable women caused the Harakmbut to retreat to their traditional lands, where they settled according to their customary geographic divisions (Gray 1997b).

Ethnic-based tensions are clear in the internal struggle for control that has characterized FENAMAD's evolution. Leaders of the Ese'Eja, Shipibo and Amahuaca peoples, who reside near FENAMAD's office, exploited their proximity to take control of the federation and its resources. Harakmbut along the upper Madre de Dios River responded by forming the Consejo Harakmbut (COHAR) in 1993, which later

included the Matsigenka and Yine groups, also from the upper basin (García 2003). Some communities wanted to withdraw from FENAMAD, which they felt did not serve their interests, and join other federations. When the Harakmbut regained control, the communities of the lower basin organized the Consejo Indígena del Bajo Madre de Dios (COINBAMAD) in 2007, and have since threatened to withdraw from FENAMAD.

FENAMAD owes its existence to networks that have contributed to reduce interethnic tensions. By regularly bringing together the headmen of its distant constituent communities, who otherwise would not have much contact, FENAMAD has improved communication. These leaders not only discuss their affairs and make decisions together but also, more importantly, exchange information and reinforce ties. This has resulted in shared identity that has caused communities of diverse ethnicities to bond. Rosengren (2003) describes how the Matsigenka leaders of Upper Urubamba, in the southern Peruvian Amazon, developed the idea that Matsigenka-speaking communities belong to a single ethnicity and organized them into a federation. In Madre de Dios, I suggest, FENAMAD similarly overcame the potential divisiveness of identification with specific ethnic groups by promoting the notion of a single, broadly defined indigenous people.

Building alliances with almost all organizations in Madre de Dios has been crucial to FENAMAD's ability to express its demands. While its main ally has been the Federación Agraria Departamental de Madre de Dios (FADEMAD), representing farmers from the Andean highlands, FENAMAD has also allied with loggers, miners, gatherers of Brazil nuts, teachers, residents of settlements on the outskirts of Puerto Maldonado and even moto-taxi drivers. In 2000, these groups and FENAMAD formed a coordinating body, Alianza de Federaciones de Madre de Dios (García 2000). In 2008, this coalition joined the Frente de Defensa de los Intereses de Madre de Dios, the labor union Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú, and other social and political organizations in an even higher level of coordination: Comité de Lucha de la Región Madre de Dios. Mobilizing as part of the larger regional movement has proved advantageous. One accomplishment was the designation, in 2002, of the Amarakaeri



Puerto Maldonado, 2009.

Danny Pinedo

Communal Reserve as a protected area intended to benefit the surrounding Harakmbut, Yine and Matsigenka communities.

More recent evidence of the effectiveness of interethnic alliances materialized in March 2012. FENAMAD allied with the Federación Minera de Madre de Dios (FEDEMIN), a body representing Andean and mestizo miners, to protest a ban on mining outside a designated 500,000-hectare corridor, issued by President Ollanta Humala's administration in response to the devastation caused

by decades of illegal extraction. Individuals as well as native communities feared for their livelihoods. FENAMAD demanded the government approve legislation allowing indigenous people to mine gold within their communities. When the government refused, FENAMAD joined thousands of miners in a two-week mining strike that resulted in the death of three protesters. Although its alliance with the miners was criticized by conservationists and other sectors of civil society, including indigenous organizations, FENAMAD succeeded in forcing the

government to negotiate the proposed legislation (LaRepublica.pe 2012).

Social networks have had both positive and adverse consequences for FENAMAD and its constituencies. For example, FENAMAD considers the plans of an American-Spanish consortium to drill for oil within the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve a threat to one of the most pristine rain forests in the region and the indigenous livelihoods derived from it. I observed how some networks that advance particular economic interests caused internal divisions that weakened FENAMAD's campaign against drilling. These networks, of course, arose out of the consortium's efforts to cultivate consent to its oil project—by hiring indigenous workers, targeting gifts and exacerbating kinship-based rivalries.

Upon returning to Puerto Maldonado, after fieldwork in Puerto Luz, I reported to the leader of FENAMAD on my research. When I told him how my findings could help the relationship between the federation and the communities, he turned his astonished gaze toward me and said, "But FENAMAD and the communities are one and the same." The communities may perceive the relationship differently. "FENAMAD

leaders come here and just tell us not to accept the company," said the headman of Puerto Luz, "but they should say they're going to provide the community electricity or gasoline for our power generator." In this context, allegiance to FENAMAD, and solidarity among communities, may depend upon the extent to which FENAMAD satisfies needs and demands.

Bridging ties are crucial to bringing small and highly autonomous kin groups into larger multi-ethnic political organizations. They are also key to helping individuals and organizations access economic resources and other benefits. But, in the process, dilemmas have arisen to pit individuals against the group, threatening to weaken indigenous mobilization in Madre de Dios. What remains to be seen is how indigenous communities and federations face these contradictions in a globalized world in which increased interaction with nonindigenous people renders bridging ties more relevant. The future of indigenous Peruvians depends on how they balance what they want as individuals and as peoples.

Danny Pinedo, a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the University of Florida, was in the 2011–2012 cycle of Fellows.

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Jessica Rich

AIDS activists in São Paulo.

Brazil's Virtuous Alliance: How the Grassroots and the Government Joined Forces against AIDS

By John Garrison and Jessica Rich

In Brazil, epidemiology, politics and institutions converged to produce a grassroots movement and partnership with government that proved crucial to fighting AIDS. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) regularly identifies the Brazilian National AIDS Program as an example of “good practice” and points to the significance of its government–civil society collaboration (UNAIDS 2007). But even this distinction understates the multifaceted role of grassroots organizations as a driving force in

AIDS policy. Their representatives have participated actively on the nation’s policymaking commissions as well as in countless planning meetings with Brazilian government officials and politicians. They do not hesitate, however, to voice criticism publicly or, when the state falls short of their expectations, to advance policy through the courts. An unusual blend of grassroots activism and political pragmatism over a 30-year span led to this effective approach to the AIDS epidemic, an effort that the IAF actively supported.

Early, proactive responses

AIDS arrived in Brazil in the early 1980s. As in the United States and Western Europe, it initially devastated urban gay communities, compounding the stigma and discrimination that already plagued them (Daniel 1991; Parker and Daniel 1991: 17-18; Galvão 2000: 52-59, 173-174). But in contrast to the denial that greeted the appearance of AIDS elsewhere in Latin America, the civic response in Brazil was early and proactive. (See Galvão 2000, Parker 2003.) Brazilians diagnosed as HIV-positive, their families and their friends were the first who rallied to decry alarming death rates, denounce discrimination, educate the public about prevention and pressure the government for increased treatment. Other organizations quickly sprouted, often led by highly educated, well-connected professionals dedicated to working with the marginalized. Despite resistance from traditionalists, clergy in some of the largest dioceses helped HIV-positive Brazilians form support groups often allied with the Pastoral da Saúde, the healthcare arm of the Catholic Church. Also notable were the Grupos de Apoio à Prevenção à AIDS (GAPA) that spread from São Paulo to other state capitals, including Salvador, where, in 1994, the IAF funded GAPA-Bahia's preventive services. Brazilians at the helm of some of these pioneering efforts would eventually provide the leadership for the government's AIDS program.

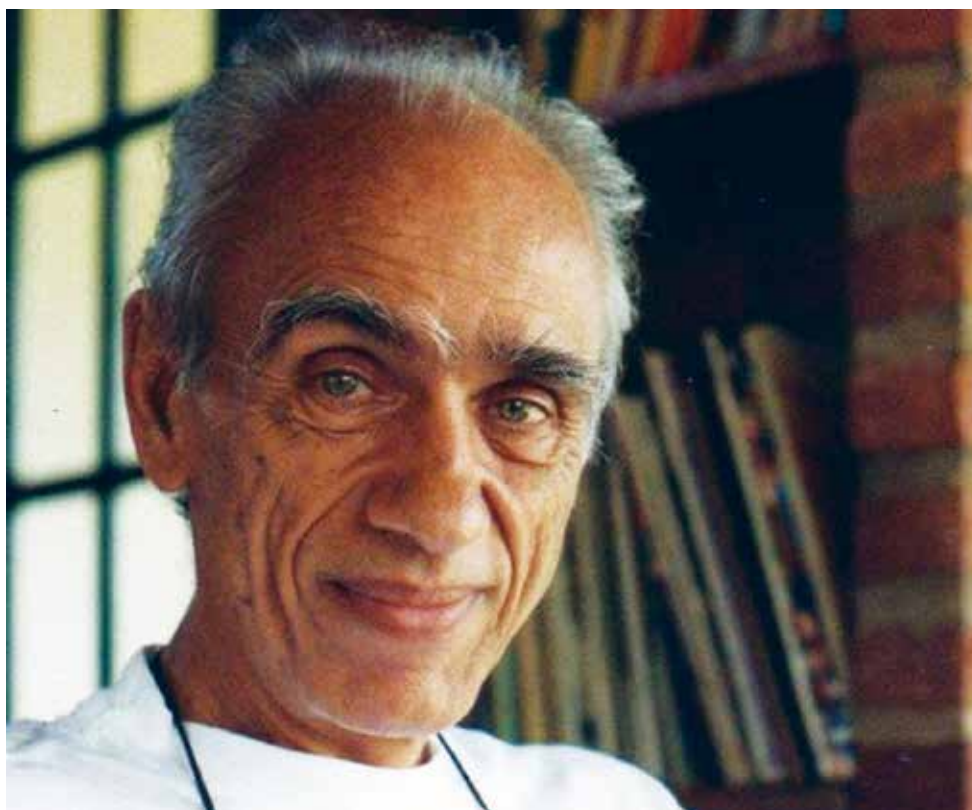
Perhaps the best-known of the advocacy groups is Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de AIDS (ABIA). Soon after its founding in 1986 by Herbert "Betinho" de Souza, ABIA became the first IAF grantee partner funded for the express purpose of producing and disseminating educational materials on AIDS. Betinho himself was an iconic social critic and activist who had spent the 1970s in exile, stripped of his citizenship by the military regime then in power. Upon his return to Brazil, thanks to new amnesty laws, he embarked on a career of grassroots organizing that extended through the early 1990s. Its legacy includes IAF grantee partner Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas (IBASE), highly regarded for its socio-economic research and policy work and launched in 1981 with just three people and a computer. Betinho also led nationwide movements pressuring for agrarian reform and ethics in politics, and organized the massive Citizens' Campaign

against Hunger and Poverty and for Life, also supported by the IAF. (See *Grassroots Development* for 1995, vol. 19, no. 2.) The Citizens' Campaign would later influence the design of social programs instituted under President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, such as *Bolsa Família*, which has helped lift 28 million Brazilians out of extreme poverty.

Betinho reluctantly took on the challenging cause of AIDS in the 1980s, during the early days of the epidemic, when Brazil's blood banks functioned virtually unregulated. An estimated 80 percent of the hemophiliacs in Rio de Janeiro alone contracted HIV through transfusions. Among them were Betinho and his two brothers. Leveraging his national reputation, Betinho announced his diagnosis and put a human face on AIDS in Brazil, much like basketball superstar Magic Johnson did in the United States in 1991. Images of Betinho in a friendly hug, which flooded the media, convinced Brazilians that they could not contract HIV through such a casual social gesture.

He also used his access to the media and civil society partners to spur the government to expand its response. To clean up the blood supply, he helped launch a national campaign, Save the Blood of the Brazilian People, eventually winning support for legislation in 1988 that banned the private sale of blood (Galvão 2008). "Now, the fact that I am fighting back is a relief," Betinho said in an interview. "If you only concentrate on the personal dimension of the misfortune, you will sink with it." ABIA was instrumental in the passage of the 1996 law mandating free antiretroviral drugs for AIDS patients throughout the country. Brazilians receiving these drugs jumped from 35,900 in 1997 to more than 200,000 in 2007, while the number of reported deaths declined during the same period (Galvão 2008; World Bank 2005: 36).

Betinho's outreach included meetings with the CEOs of Xerox, Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, Petrobras and other corporate giants to encourage them to provide treatment to their HIV-positive employees, conduct prevention programs in the workplace and donate to grassroots educational efforts. Hesitant at first, executives soon discovered that exercising social responsibility by investing in measures to address the AIDS epidemic improved branding and in some cases the bottom line. Betinho



Herbert “Betinho” de Souza.

also worked to convince the World Bank that civil society should be an essential component of its AIDS project in Brazil. In 1997, he met with the Bank’s president and invited the country director to his home to discuss ways to improve the impact and reach of the Bank’s AIDS financing (Galvão 2008).

As it turned out, the expertise developed by ABIA and other civic organizations factored into the government’s willingness to collaborate with civil society on policy guidelines. To this day ABIA is known as a leading source of information on AIDS in Brazil. Before agreeing to a second loan of \$165 million in 1999, for example, the World Bank asked the head of ABIA, Jane Galvão, to determine the social impact of its first loan earmarked to address AIDS.

In 1990, ABIA set aside its garage space and \$10,000 toward the founding of Grupo PelaVIDDA, an organization intended to complement ABIA’s work with more aggressive positions and a greater focus on treatment. PelaVIDDA was headed by another returned exile, Herbert Daniel, openly gay and the AIDS movement’s second most iconic figure. The two Herberts were near opposites in personality—Betinho

intellectual and reflective, Daniel passionate and expressive—and so were the organizations they led. ABIA’s team of physicians, lawyers, sociologists and journalists provided the research and analysis required by the movement to inform legislation and monitor government programs. PelaVIDDA was combative and theatrical, staging protests in pursuit of cultural transformation and grabbing the headlines. Its very existence stemmed from a dramatic gesture: Its founders had all publicly announced their diagnosis without regard for the consequences—a radi-

cal move at the time, given the prevailing stigma and ostracism. PelaVIDDA complemented ABIA’s agenda by providing needed support for people living with HIV and AIDS, including psychological counseling. It developed the first AIDS hotline in Brazil, after Daniel discovered this tool during a trip to California. Herbert Daniel’s groundbreaking work was recognized in *AIDS in the World*, the seminal book published in 1992, the year he succumbed to AIDS.

Eventually the clusters formed by these and other early grassroots AIDS groups evolved into local, regional and nationwide networks that exchanged information and began to influence public policy. Those located in state capitals—São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, Salvador—became active and highly visible. One, Rede Nacional de Pessoas Vivendo com HIV/AIDS (RNP+), grew to include dozens of care and support organizations throughout Brazil. Several others joined forces in 1989 to organize the first National AIDS Conference that brought together hundreds of HIV-positive Brazilians, their family members and activists to discuss community responses (Galvão 2000).

Government support

By the 1990s, AIDS had spread to low-income heterosexual populations. New advocacy and prevention organizations emerged in favelas and in rural areas of the impoverished North and Northeast, reflecting the changing demographics. They included Brazilians of African and indigenous descent, sex workers, street children and Brazilians with disabilities.

A significant force behind this new phase of grassroots organizing was federal support. When the government developed its National AIDS Program in 1985, partly in response to relentless public pressure, its director was careful to integrate civil society into the policy process. The program offered civic organizations the means to improve their delivery of services, manage their finances and raise funds, and even organize meetings of advocacy networks. Between 1994 and 2010, the Brazilian government disbursed some \$145 million to more than 1,500 grassroots organizations undertaking some 3,500 projects in education, prevention or treatment. This sum included \$52 million or 12 percent of the World Bank's \$432 million loan to the Brazilian government to address the spread of HIV (Ministry of Health 2008, World Bank 2010). Channeling World Bank resources to civil society was unusual at the time, but the approach worked so well in Brazil that it was emulated in Africa where civil society organizations in 30 countries received \$1.8 billion, nearly half of the funding for the Bank's regional Multi-Country AIDS Program throughout the 2000s.

The investment enabled Brazilian organizations to analyze policy, continue their advocacy and offer services that ordinarily a government agency might provide: educational campaigns in communities and in public schools, the distribution of prophylactics and medications, patient care and counseling and family support. The National AIDS Program itself recruited representatives of civil society to serve on policymaking committees, manage its grant-making, advise grantees, monitor their progress, conduct demographic surveys and design community responses. Their grassroots groups used public funds to fight discrimination and develop young advocates and leaders. All this, along with access to information on the government's decision-making process, encouraged confidence on

the part of AIDS organizations as well as professional growth and greater responsibility for AIDS work.

The National AIDS Program pursued collaboration with civil society for several reasons, among them its need for their support. The mere mention of the epidemic and the preventive measures needed to address it was sufficient to galvanize the opposition of certain sectors. Civil society could mobilize grassroots constituencies to counter this pressure and monitor local implementation of federal AIDS policies in order to assure compliance with national guidelines. In addition, the social complexities of AIDS made officials view civil society's support as essential. Authorities with the National AIDS Program considered organizations working at the community level or with the marginalized better positioned to reach the populations most at risk and more apt to be realistic about how to modify behaviors. Their staff enjoyed the trust required to approach personal issues, such as sex practices and drug habits, and interact with Brazilians who might be suspicious of authority. And working through civil society could spare the government association with such politically sensitive topics as condom use or needle exchange.

The dynamic and effective grassroots response to the epidemic, which the government assisted, is supported by examples found throughout Brazil. In the Northeastern state of Sergipe, public funds awarded in 1993 financed a multifaceted program launched by the Associação Sergipana de Prostitutas. The goal was to train 400 health agents in preventive measures work now credited with substantially reducing the rate of HIV infection among the sex workers targeted. The government also channeled resources to the Associação Brasileira de Redutores de Danos (ABORDA) based in Rio Grande do Sul, whose capital, Porto Alegre, had reported in the 1990s the highest rates of infection due to intravenous drug use. The support allowed ABORDA's mostly volunteer staff to reach more than double the number of drug users envisioned as well as form effective working relationships with key care facilities and medical professionals, counsel children of users, and train university students and "neighborhood agents" to manage needle exchanges. Importantly, this work restored dignity and purpose to one of the most discriminated and vulnerable groups in society.

The Operations Evaluation Department of the World Bank, which analyzed the role of these organizations in the control of AIDS in Brazil, confirmed their benefit when it reported that they were “highly effective in reaching stigmatized and marginalized groups, making available to them both prevention and care services, for which they have a comparative advantage vis-à-vis public services” (World Bank 2004). What this report recognized was that the Brazilian government’s willingness to partner with civil society to expand and improve its own AIDS response efforts was key to its overall success.

Brazil has stood out as an international standard-bearer for AIDS policy development. Its guarantee of free access to life-saving antiretroviral drugs is a benefit lacking in many wealthier countries. Brazilians living with HIV/AIDS enjoy legal protection against discrimination. Prevention programs reduced the incidence of HIV to half the number of infections predicted for Brazil by the year 2000 (*The Economist* 2007). “Due to the efforts of civil society and Government,” the World Bank reported, “Brazil has been able to contain the epidemic at 0.6 percent of the adult population and has halved the number of AIDS-related deaths” (World Bank 2010). This led then-director general of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, to comment: “[W]e must draw lessons from Brazil’s experience so that your example can save lives and help development elsewhere: in Latin America, in Asia, in Africa, in Europe. We must learn from Brazil. We must learn fast. And we must apply what we learn quickly and effectively” (Matsuura 2002).

The movement today

Government support has had two significant repercussions. First, Brazil’s AIDS movement has grown from a few dozen groups to more than 500 civic organizations officially registered with the Ministry of Health—the vast majority of which receive some form of government support. Second, activists use a broader repertoire of strategies to influence AIDS

policy. Grassroots associations still organize street protests, publicize their demands via the media and otherwise openly air their grievances. But negotiations that were once anchored in personal connections to insiders have given way to institutionalized relationships with all three branches of government. AIDS councils formed by governments at the national, state and municipal levels have become important venues where grassroots advocates work with executive agencies to shape policy. Attorneys with civil society organizations have become effective at litigation, often partnering with state and federal prosecutors to file class-action suits. And a congressional caucus builds the constituencies necessary to advance legislation.

At the same time, close ties between grassroots associations and the government have generated some controversy over the years. Activists and academics warned of the dangers of co-optation, whereby Brazil’s grassroots AIDS associations would temper their criticism for fear of biting the government hand that feeds them. But while the effects of official funding on grassroots advocacy continue to be debated, evidence indicates that the Brazilian government’s practice of awarding grants to civic groups

has introduced significant opportunities for organization and mobilization. Funding from the National AIDS Program not only financed service projects but also advocacy campaigns and the growth of grassroots networks. Rather than silencing AIDS activists,

federal support seems to have enabled them to voice their demands even louder.

Challenges ahead

Despite Brazil’s remarkable achievements, AIDS is still a problem that requires grassroots mobilization. Ironically, early achievements have given rise to new challenges. As more effective antiretroviral drugs are developed, for example, grassroots organizations must encourage the Brazilian government to pay for and distribute new and increasingly expensive medication.

*We must learn from Brazil.
We must learn fast.
And we must apply what we learn
quickly and effectively.*

—Koichiro Matsuura,
director general, UNESCO

They must also reach a new generation of Brazilians who might be lulled into complacency by the relatively wide availability of antiretrovirals and the success of these drug therapies (*O Globo* 2009).

But while the Brazilian AIDS movement is still strong, its future is uncertain. Grassroots organizations are experiencing budget shortfalls. Even the most prominent and professionalized have suspended prevention programs, and some have shut their doors. The movement can no longer depend on formerly reliable sources of funding. Reasoning that Brazil has “graduated” from the need for an emergency response to AIDS, international donors such as the World Bank have retreated over the last decade, shifting their support to poorer regions around the globe suffering from more widespread infection. In this context, government support has become even more important to the Brazilian movement’s survival, but it too is threatened.

Once protected from legislative meddling, funding for the National AIDS Program is now subject to congressional approval and, according to recent reports, could be susceptible to channeling to other public health purposes (Agência de Notícias da AIDS 2012).

The Brazilian experience has shown that it is possible for grassroots organizations to actively engage governments and rely on their funding, while still maintaining the independence to push for policy changes and better services. Key Brazilian authorities have appreciated the complementary role of civil society in the design and implementation of the Brazilian response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and recognized pressure as legitimate even when it has targeted them. Grassroots groups, for their part, have shown commitment, resolve and patience as they have cooperated with different levels of bureaucracy, resorting to protest only after exhausting the



Courtesy Jessica Rich

Jessica Rich and grassroots activist Roberto Pereira, former president of the umbrella organization Fórum de ONGs/AIDS do Estado do Rio de Janeiro.



Decades of uninterrupted commitment: Betinho and John Garrison in 1994 at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, D.C.; grassroots activists in Rio calling attention to depleted antiretroviral stocks in 2010.



possibilities for dialogue. No one exemplified this process of effective and strategic evolution better than Betinho, who began his career as a vocal opponent of the Brazilian government and evolved into a civic leader who influenced both official policy and the practice of corporate social responsibility. While the historic convergence of an activist civil society and a proactive government bureaucracy to fight the AIDS epidemic was indeed “made in Brazil,” the

approaches and lessons of this virtuous circle are already being replicated in other parts of the world.

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Aid, Development and What Counts as Success

By Marion Ritchey Vance



"Prior to this course, I was under the impression that foreign aid is unhelpful, counter-productive, does not reach the people who need it the most, is wasteful and sometimes even does more harm than good."

"This class has made issues more concrete, giving me a much broader and more complex understanding of not only what foreign aid is, but what doing it right entails."

Carleton College—my alma mater in Northfield, Minnesota—has steadily evolved from the traditional and somewhat insular school I knew half a century ago into a dynamic and experimental learning environment. I was, in a small way, part of that ongoing transformation. With a great deal of hesitation I accepted an invitation to teach a short course in spring term of 2012. Under the Headley program for distinguished visitors-in-residence, these invitational courses cut across departments and disciplines to bring external perspectives to the halls of academe. My patently non academic career, Carleton convinced me, was a drawing card, not the liability I imagined.

Expectations seemed simple enough—to impart 25 years of experience with grassroots development in Latin America. Preparing to do that coherently and within the time assigned was another story. The subject matter was straightforward: the genesis and evolution of the Inter-American Foundation. The challenge: to breathe life into an era more remote for these students than was World War I for my generation and to bring myself in step with their digital, technological 21st-century world. The learning curve on the latter was steep! The essence of my proposal appeared in the course catalogue:

At the close of the turbulent 1960s, the U.S. government took a remarkable step. Disillusioned by the failures of conventional foreign aid, Congress created the Inter-American Foundation outside the aid establishment. Its mission? To make grants directly to grassroots organizations for projects they themselves design and implement to empower the poor. Foundation staff was to listen, not lecture. How did it work? Can development emanate from the bottom up?

Marion Vance will speak from personal experience and encourage discussion of issues that confront development programs.

A mindset turned on its head

A report issued by the United Nations in 1958 summarized the ideology generally accepted by development professionals through the 1960s, when U.S. know-how reigned supreme: “Native culture is the major obstacle to improving conditions in Latin America. The majority of the people are still speaking their ancient languages, maintaining their age-old customs and superstitions, wearing their traditional costumes, and farming their land on a subsistence scale.” This perspective echoed an earlier study published by the U.S. Department of State, which asserted that the “native world view” and antiquated traditions in Bolivia are “inimical to development.” Native peoples’ reluctance to adopt the mechanized farming techniques of the U.S. heartland or import purebred cattle and sheep showed “lack of motivation toward economic progress.” Decades later, as the U.N. itself acknowledged, detritus of imported development models and technologies litters the Southern hemisphere: rusted-out machinery; flush toilets stacked in villages with no running water; abandoned farms where fragile soil was stripped of its rainforest cover.

In the context of those times, the founding principles of the Inter-American Foundation were downright revolutionary. The unlikely source of the unorthodox thinking that produced IAF was no less an establishment figure than George Cabot Lodge, a Harvard professor and scion of a socially and politically prominent New England family. Drawing on years of research and experience in Latin America, Lodge postulated that no attempt to address poverty in the region would succeed without fundamental changes in relationships, in the social and political imbalances that impede progress for the poor. His conclusions, later published in his book *The Engines of Change*, strongly influenced the intellectual and political climate that favored a quest for alternatives. An exceptional group of Lodge’s contemporaries from both the public and private sectors took advantage of a propitious moment to advocate for a small, experimental agency that could identify and support

home-grown initiatives for change in Latin America and the Caribbean. The IAF was to work from the bottom up, to engage people at the grassroots. The intent was not simply to fund projects but to strengthen the nongovernmental organizations that would eventually undergird a viable civil society.

The notion that progress could be generated within communities found strong echo in the testimony of returning Peace Corps volunteers and others who had experienced village life first-hand and the consequences of misguided aid. A stinging critique of top-down programs appeared in 1973 in William and Elizabeth Paddock’s *We Don’t Know How: An Independent Audit of What They Call Success in Foreign Assistance* (Iowa State University Press). The IAF responded in 1977 with *They Know How*, which drew on its own early experience in the field and candid feedback from local leaders to articulate its signature thesis: that poor people are capable of taking the initiative to improve their own lives.

Looking back on the aspirations of the IAF’s founders, how did their bold move play out on the ground? Did the offbeat approach of respecting local ideas and honoring local culture bear fruit? Have projects supported by IAF helped change the relationships so eloquently described by Lodge? What succeeded and what failed? How do you assess results? What is the lasting legacy of the IAF? What were the breakthroughs and where did it stumble? To get a better handle on these questions, I dusted off publications from the IAF’s early days. I found myself stunned by their lasting relevance. Rereading articles in the IAF’s journal *Grassroots Development* and books authored by colleagues and external consultants, I began to see patterns and trends over time and similarities across regional lines. I acquired new respect for an institution willing to take risks, to publish unvarnished feedback from early interlocutors, and to devote an entire issue of *Grassroots Development* to failed projects.

From prologue to podium

Course notes, new laptop and flash drives in hand, I arrived on campus in April. Physically, the core of Carleton was so familiar that I had trouble thinking of myself as “faculty” not a student treading the familiar paths. Socially, especially for women,

the scene was worlds removed from the strict dress codes and curfews of our day. A vibrant multicolor, multiethnic, multicultural collage has replaced the monotone hues of the 1950s.

Though my teaching stint was under auspices of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the class was open to students of any discipline. A roster of some 40 applicants was winnowed to 25, the limit for discussion classes. Majors ranged from sociology/anthropology to political science and environmental studies to biology, economics and math making for an interesting mix of responses to the material. Some students had assumed that foreign aid is altruistic and a positive force; others were deeply disenchanted by what they had seen in Africa, Haiti and South America.

"Prior to this class, my conception of foreign aid was, admittedly, overly simplistic. I found the phrase rather self-explanatory, typically what a wealthy and developed nation provides a less developed country with the intention of benefitting its people."

"Taking this class...has both confirmed and contradicted previous opinions. While it unfortunately seems that many of the problems of [foreign] aid I had heard about are more the rule than the exception, I was very surprised to discover a U.S. government agency that operates in a very different manner."

Faces of foreign aid

The task I set for myself was to flesh out the abstract concept of foreign aid. A brief overview of the Alliance for Progress of the 1960s examined the premises that underlay one of its main tools—wholesale transfer of U.S. technology and know-how to Latin America. Failure of that top-down strategy set the scene for the radically different tack taken by the Inter-American Foundation a decade later. To bring to life the context and the characters behind the creation of the IAF, I assigned first-hand accounts by the original board and staff and subsequent reflections by evaluators. Students

were particularly moved by the writings of Bill Dyal, Bob Mashek, Doug and Steve Hellinger, and Pat Breslin.

"The assumption that people know what they need and are capable of creating solutions to their problems deeply resonates with me."

More through images than words, the class got a feel for the enormous diversity of groups that applied to IAF for grants and the range of their projects. In each case, the feature that captured students' attention was—in the campus *parlance du jour*, "agency," the fact that people who were to benefit had a role in shaping the project and carrying it out.

"I have come to learn that there is a significant difference between large-scale aid efforts that seek immediate change by throwing in money and supplies and grassroots efforts working with locals to create sustainable change."

A small subset of grants, described in "The Arts and Social Change," published in the 1979 journal, attracted particular attention. The article grew out of IAF's endeavor to understand the rationale behind grant requests that seemed frivolous, even to its own staff. What do music, dance, theater and cultural identity have to do with development? Why fund such things when people are going hungry? A Caribbean grantee helped explain why, especially in post-colonial or multiethnic societies, validation of cultural roots and traditions is not a frill; why respect for cultural identity can be a touchstone for progress: "European cultural patterns have overshadowed most others in the Americas. People of different origins find themselves shedding the culture that gave their life meaning. [Culture determines] what is exalted and what is denigrated in a society. Ultimately, denigration produces feelings of inferiority which become expressed as lack of initiative—an important, but often unacknowledged, barrier to development." Seeing one's heritage accepted and celebrated can help overcome alienation and apathy and unleash creativity.

Something learned, even from failure

Did “they know how” work in practice? The short answer is not always. Assigned readings and class discussion covered projects that had succeeded, if not always quite as envisioned, but also those that faltered or failed. In fact, failures prompted some of the most interesting conversations. We talked about a project in Mexico, described in “Curdled Milk: A Dairy Project Gone Sour,” published in the 1988 journal. The proposal had appeared to include the elements for success: participating *campesinos* had an impressive record of organizing to negotiate fair prices for agricultural products; experienced advisors were on hand to apply a tested technological model; the dairy herd was adapted to the local environment; there was a ready market. Yet the endeavor failed. As it turned out, the enthusiasm behind the *campesino* movement, which had so impressed the IAF representative, did not translate into a solid organization capable of managing a complex project. The technology was there; the social cohesion was not.

“If I were to put into words what I have learned in this class, it would have to be that nothing is as easy as it sounds.”

Organizational issues, in fact, underlie many failures. The story of two Guaraní communities in Argentina appears in “Dreams Among the Ruins” in the 2005 journal. Initially, the project went well. The local bishop granted land for community use. Bilingual schools were set up. The IAF funded facilities to raise chickens and pigs. But when the church hierarchy changed and the well-meaning advisors withdrew, it became obvious that the community itself had been sidelined. The advisors had run the ambitious enterprise rather than work through indigenous organizations. However, although the infrastructure soon lay in ruins, the effects of education endured. Fifteen years after the project collapsed, bilingual leaders have emerged and organized, confident in their cultural identity. “It is painful to remember what the community had and has lost,” one of them reflected. “But we learned from it; our generation has a sense that we have to start building again.”

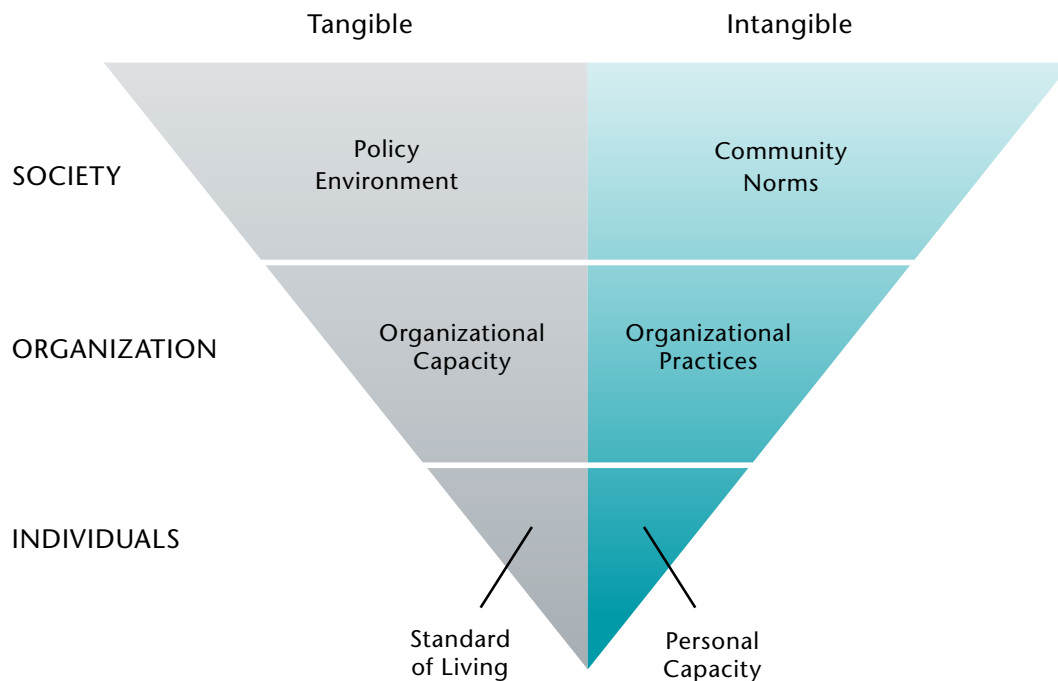
The case is representative of a rather common dynamic, in which a given project fails but the experience becomes the basis for a more realistic endeavor down the road. First to give this phenomenon a name was the late Albert Hirschman, a noted development economist who spent 14 weeks in 1983 visiting IAF projects. He dubbed it the principle of conservation and mutation of social energy. To paraphrase Hirschman, sometimes when an organization fails to attain its objectives, the “social energy” it generates does not die out; it resurfaces later on, channeled more productively.

And what of the Inter-American Foundation itself? Like the organizations it supports, the agency’s trajectory has been uneven. The simple fact that its approach endures after 40 years is noteworthy. The IAF did not invent grassroots development, but its experience has played a key role in legitimizing it and giving voice to local leadership. “Today [that] voice echoes in the language of multilateral banks and...development assistance agencies,” Ron Weber noted in his report on a recent meeting of IAF alumni. “What is less clear is if the words mean the same thing.... [but] the fact that large institutions are gearing down to work with NGOs...testifies to the importance of grassroots development.” The NGOs’ advantage lies in agility, flexibility and willingness to take risks—qualities that tend to diminish over time. It will take effort for the IAF to maintain its edge, keeping the arteries clear, unclogged by the bureaucratic quicksand its founders so passionately sought to avoid.

Evaluation, measurement, results

Conversations about the multifaceted, sometimes ambiguous, nature of grassroots projects led into the question of evaluation. How does one go about assessing results of projects (or institutions) that don’t neatly fit a traditional mold? Outcomes may be more subjective than concrete; there may be no bright line between “success” and failure. Grantees urged the IAF to differentiate between basic needs, such as food and shelter, and quality of life, which also encompasses self-respect, identity, sense of place and purpose, and human relationships. Evaluation derives from values. Questions posed by the dilemma of evaluation segued into a session on the conceptual tool created

Grassroots Development Framework



at the Inter-American Foundation, the Grassroots Development Framework (GDF or “the Cone”). In addition to standard material measures, it takes into account intangible effects on the quality of life; on attitudes, policies and practices; on the fabric of civil society. This aspect of the course more than any other prompted students to question, to examine assumptions and to undertake research on their own.

“Imagine [development] as an iceberg. The tip of this iceberg contains measurable gains from foreign aid, such as increases in standard of living. This tip [becomes the basis] on which many organizations judge the overall impact of the aid project. But how much of the iceberg is hidden under the water? ... Aid organizations should refine methodologies to measure the depth and volume of intangible benefits in the icy waters of foreign aid”

“Where is the Power in Empowerment?”

Classroom discussions led up to that question, which became the topic of my presentation to a wider campus audience. The underlying theme was changes in relationships, that key ingredient identified by George Cabot Lodge some 50 years earlier. The buzzword “empowerment” has long been convenient shorthand. Many agree on the ideal in principle but they differ on what constitutes it in practice. In *They Know How*, IAF took a first step toward defining some indicators. Dubbed “vital signs” and “social gains,” they were intended to get at the transformation of relationships presaged by Lodge: status and legitimation of marginal cultures; accountable leaders and a voice in governance; access to resources and leverage in the marketplace. To put a human face on “empowerment,” I presented some success stories, with a big caveat that not all grantees wrought such change, and for those that did, the road was long and bumpy.

The power in empowerment: The transformation of relationships has led to status and legitimation for marginalized cultures, a voice in governance, access to land and leverage in the marketplace.



Once denigrated as “just Indians,” Andean weavers, primarily women, have become recognized as the artists they are. Their works are displayed in museums and sold in exclusive galleries. In 2010, 400 accomplished textile professionals celebrated their art at the Tinkuy de Tejedores, a three-day meeting organized in Urubamba, Peru, by IAF grantee Centro de Textiles de Cusco.



Jeffrey Andrés Wright

Courtesy Carlos Criollo



After centuries of living on the margin without the right to vote, indigenous populations are now enfranchised. By 2006 indigenous Ecuadorians had elected more than 1,000 representatives, accountable to their communities, to municipal and provincial councils and the head of county governments, as well as 11 indigenous deputies to the Ecuadorian Congress. Practical projects funded by IAF helped build literacy and organizational skills that paved the way for participation in political life and a shift in relationship with the dominant culture.

Indigenous Ecuadorian activist Mariano Curicama, center in blue, leads a meeting on the management of forest resources in Chimborazo. Curicama rallied the newly enfranchised indigenous majority of Guamote to win election as town councilman, alternate national deputy and finally mayor, a post he left in 2000. Later he became a cabinet minister.

Patrick Breslin



An early IAF grant, \$35,710 in 1971, helped the basureros in the Corporación de Papeleros de Colombia improve their livelihoods. Over time, awards enabled scavengers in sordid urban dumps throughout the Americas to organize into recyclers with safer workplaces, better incomes and most importantly, status in society and respect. "People used to confuse us with the trash," one recycler said. "Now they treat us like human beings."



Paula Durbin



In 2003, IAF grantee Associação dos Catadores de Papel, Papelão e Material Reaproveitável (ASMARE) hosted The Second Festival of Trash and Citizenship in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, which began with a march for inclusion and respect. Later, recyclers from throughout the hemisphere attending the summit heard from Marina Silva, then the Brazilian minister for the environment and later a presidential candidate, who spoke at the opening ceremony on the importance of their work.

The craggy profile of success

Articles in *Grassroots Development* have tracked the gains made by growers of coffee, sisal, cacao and other raw materials. The poster child for leverage in the marketplace and a dramatic change of status is El Ceibo, a federation of Bolivian cooperatives whose spirit reflects its namesake, the deep-rooted tree that grows steadily and seems never to die. The group's origin and evolution are documented in *Llamas, Weavings, and Organic Chocolate* (University of Notre Dame Press 2001) by Kevin Healy, IAF representative for Bolivia.

Once a small and precarious group, the organization is now 1,200 farmers strong. Its family farms harvest 70 percent of the organic cacao produced in Bolivia. Their federation is a leading exporter of cacao beans and chocolate products, bearing the El Ceibo brand, destined for Europe, Asia and the U.S. Last year, the federation celebrated its 35th anniversary by announcing that the Bolivian development bank, unapproachable in the early days, took the opportunity to offer a hefty line of credit. El Ceibo exemplifies changes in relationships across the spectrum: farmers to the land; producers to suppliers, markets, and financial institutions; and recognition of an authentic indigenous organization on the national stage.

On a larger scale, El Ceibo typifies characteristics common to projects ultimately seen as successes. They are tuned to local culture and mores. They

Manuel Nuñez



El Ceibo chocolate for sale in the United States.

build organizational strength and the leadership base is broad. They address the causes, not just the symptoms, of poverty and inequality. They tap into aspirations that transcend their particular bounds. They take a long time, perhaps decades. Progress is not linear; at any juncture, they can look like failures. They raise a question: How, and at what point, does one assess this complex, circuitous process called grassroots development? Some results can be calculated in dollars and cents. Others are intangible, but real, and immeasurably meaningful to the people who live them. They have a great deal to do with attaining that holy grail of development: sustainability. The campus-wide talk culminated with a brief glimpse of the Grassroots Development Framework, developed precisely to take into account multi-dimensional projects such as El Ceibo. Introduction to "the Cone" prompted rich conversations; one Carleton professor planned to incorporate aspects of the GDF into her classroom.

Final reflections

The opportunity to reflect with Carleton students on a unique chapter in U.S. interaction with Latin America closed a long loop from the theoretical world view of my undergraduate days through realities in the field. Doubt about whether I'd managed to convey the experience as I had hoped was dispelled in spades by students' papers. I was blown away by the quality of their written work and the underlying clarity and originality of thought. Some of their thoughts are captured in the quotes interspersed throughout these pages. I came away buoyed by confidence in America's youth and with hope that the values and the social conscience that permeate student life can somehow be carried over into the broader society.

Marion Ritchey Vance retired from the IAF in 1995 following two decades' service as regional director for the Andes and as director of learning. She created the Grassroots Development Framework in collaboration with Carl Swartz and Latin American colleagues.



Courtesy FRESOTA

In partnership with Colombian RedAmérica member Fundación Smurfit, farmers in the grassroots cooperative FRESOTA increased their income from strawberry production.

Grassroots Transformadores

Representatives of grassroots organizations, businesses, corporate foundations and their allies gathered Feb. 27 in Antigua, Guatemala, to celebrate with the winners of the first Latin American Grassroots Development Award, recognizing outstanding community development initiatives as well as the donors that financed, encouraged and otherwise supported them.

The award, known as *Transformadores*, was sponsored by the Inter-American Foundation and the Inter-American Network of Corporate Foundations and Actions for Grassroots Development (RedAmérica), an IAF-initiated business alliance committed to supporting the self-help efforts of the organized poor throughout the hemisphere. Four initiatives took the honors:

- Empresa Comunitaria que Genera Desarrollo en el Cauca, undertaken by Cooperativa de Productores de Fresa de Sotarà (FRESOTA) with the support of Fundación Smurfit Cartón de Colombia, improved the income of families who grow strawberries in rural communities of the municipality of Sotarà, department
- Parceria Votorantim pela Educação, supported by Instituto Votorantim, mobilized families, schools, local governments and businesses in 28 municipalities in 12 Brazilian states, in a massive boost to education. Activities include an annual call for essays which drew more than 6,000 entries in 2012. Educators now reinforce crucial skills by structuring lessons around the popular contest.
- Holcim Brazil's takeover of a cement factory resulted in the loss of more than 1,000 jobs in the municipality of Barroso, Minas Gerais. To mitigate the effect on families, Instituto Holcim, the company's foundation, worked with residents, the municipality and other businesses on a 10-year plan to improve Barroso. Among other results, it led to the formation of Associação Ortópolis Barroso,

which has mobilized resources for projects that have employed milk producers, mechanics and recyclers, and improved the municipal cultural and sports infrastructure.

- **Modelo de Desarrollo Integral: La Experiencia Caluco** [Comprehensive Development Model: The Caluco Experiment], an initiative of Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social (FUSADES), targeted the reduction of poverty in Caluco, one of the poorest municipalities in El Salvador. FUSADES spearheaded an alliance of residents and local government officials to draft a development plan for Caluco, which improved infrastructure for electricity, water and education and helped subsistence farmers earn income by growing vegetables for sale to Wal-Mart and other supermarkets.

RedEAmérica members submitted 38 nominees, representing nine countries, which were subsequently winnowed to 11 finalists. The four winners were selected by a jury that included Robert Kaplan, the IAF's president; Yolanda Londoño, vice-president for global social responsibility for Tupperware Brands

Corporation; Rosario Quispe, founder and director of the Argentine grassroots organization Asociación Warimi of Argentina; and Marcos Kisil, president of Brazil's Institute for the Development of Social Investment (IDIS). Selection criteria included the successful application of the grassroots approach, demonstrated development of the ability to get ahead collectively, transformation, sustainability and meaningful learning. The initiatives in Cauca and Barroso had received IAF funding under bilateral agreements requiring the RedEAmérica members to match the IAF's contributions.

"All these donors gambled on innovative responses to recurring problems," said Margareth Flórez, executive director of RedEAmérica. "The experiences inject new energy into the search for solutions that address the causes rather than the consequences of poverty and provide grist for public policies that empower communities, develop organizations, build citizenship and social capital, promote inclusion and strengthen democracy." For more information, visit www.redeamerica.org/premiolatinoamericano.—*Eduardo Rodríguez-Frías with Eliana Nieto Rodríguez, communications coordinator, RedEAmérica*

Courtesy Instituto Holcim



Brazilian recyclers working with Instituto Holcim and Associação Ortópolis Barroso to improve their community.

Haitian-Dominican Exchange

On Jan. 24, four young Haitians from the new Coopérative des Artisans en Métallurgie de Jérémie (COOPAMEJ) arrived in the Dominican Republic to learn first-hand how cooperatives function. Fineau Anthoniel, Jean-Félix Gesnel, Mifrand Rénoïd and Jean-Philippe Geslin Adony, who range in age from 22 to 25, are metalworkers trained by IAF grantee partner L'Ecole de Fabrication Métallique pour les Démonis (EFAMED). Although the two countries share a border, the voyage from Jérémie, on the tip of Haiti's southern peninsula, had taken two days by plane and bus.

COOPAMEJ produces industrial building components, grates, doors and windows, as well as furniture, agricultural tools and, since May, wheelbarrows. In anticipation of registering their organization with Haiti's Conseil National des Coopératives (CNC), members completed the required course on cooperatives, which stressed theory, but they wanted to experience a working

Jenny Petrow



COOPAMEJ metalworkers.

cooperative on site. Three such going concerns welcomed them in the Dominican Republic: COOPCreativa, which manufactures toys and furniture in Santo Domingo; Cooperativa de Pescadores y Prestadores de Servicios Turísticos de La Caleta (COOPRESCA), whose fishers and tour operators work in the La Caleta marine reserve; and Cooperativa La Altagracia, a savings and loan association in Santiago. COOPCreativa and COOPRESCA had received IAF support through grantee partners Fundación FOCO and Reef Check Dominican Republic, respectively.

Cooperativa La Altagracia was on the itinerary at the recommendation of the Instituto de Desarrollo y Crédito Cooperativo, CNC's counterpart in the Dominican Republic.

The visitors felt the most kinship with COOPCreativa. "They were about the same age as us," Adony explained. "And like us, they also have a trade." Upon their return to Haiti, the young men immediately applied practices learned from the toy makers. "They continue to meet even if they don't have orders to fill. It helps them stay motivated and solve problems together. Probably the most important thing we learned from COOPCreativa was problem solving," said Anthoniel. Now members of COOPAMEJ meet weekly instead of monthly, which they say helps develop a group ethos. They are also developing reserves to cover returned items and are organizing themselves into shifts, other tips offered by COOPCreativa.

COOPRESCA's seafaring members appeared at first to have little in common with the metalworkers but the Dominican cooperative's organizational structure, bylaws and the training required for membership soon felt familiar. Because the Haitians are from a seaside city, a bonus was learning something about protecting a marine environment. Cooperativa La Altagracia's thousands of members and six-decade history impressed them. "One day we can be 60 years old like Cooperativa Altagracia and maybe even offer financial services," Adony commented.

Luis Mena, who provides liaison services for the IAF in the Dominican Republic, organized the visit. "I was most struck by the warm reception and immediate connection between visitors and their hosts," he said, "as well as the real desire of the members of COOPCreativa and COOPRESCA to continue to support the Haitians, if from a distance, and to visit Jérémie and learn about COOPAMEJ."

Even metalworkers who stayed home recognize the value of the trip, and a second group plans to visit the Dominican cooperatives next year. An important subtext here is the power of interaction and optimism among young people, a subject the local and international media overlook when reporting on the relationship between Haitians and Dominicans. —Jenny Petrow, IAF representative for the Dominican Republic and Haiti

Advocate for Afro-Descendants

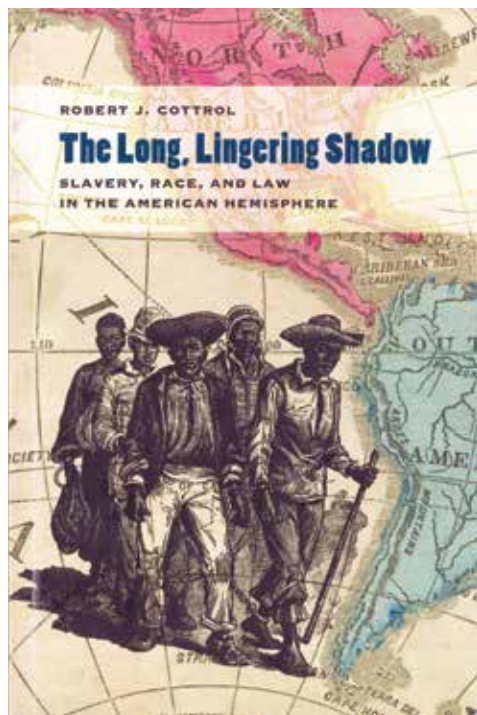
Delegates from the Plataforma Cumbre Mundial de Afrodescendientes (PCMA) visited the IAF on Feb. 11, the first stop in a week-long itinerary co-sponsored by the IAF. They represented communities of African descent in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Spain and the United States. The PCMA was formed to combat exclusion and advocate for the rights of African descendants. It emerged from the First World Summit of Afro-descendants organized by IAF grantee partner Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario (ODECO) and attended by more than 75 representatives of civil society organizations, donor agencies and government in conjunction with the United Nations' declaration of 2011 as the International Year of the African Descendant.

PCMA delegates and IAF staff.

The summit's action plan called for an organization representing African descendants across the Americas and elsewhere and designated ODECO as the executive secretariat. Since helping Organización Negra Centroamericana (ONECA) become legally constituted in Honduras, ODECO has developed into a leading advocate and source of information on issues that affect African descendants in Central America. Its immediate priorities include the development of a proposal for a university, a permanent forum for African descendants within the Organization of American States, and work and fundraising plans. The delegates' February agenda also included meetings at the U.S. Department of State, the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the U.S. Congress. —*John Reed, IAF representative for Honduras*



Mark Caicedo



African Descendants and a Past Still Present

by Paula Durbin

**The Long, Lingerin Shadow:
Slavery, Race, and Law in the American Hemisphere**

By Robert J. Cottrol

The University of Georgia Press: Athens, 2013

Such was the demand for *Grassroots Development* for 2007, with its focus on African descendants and development, that the Inter-American Foundation reprinted it twice. A highlight in that popular issue was Robert Cottrol's introduction, "Coming into Their Own: The Afro-Latin Struggle for Equality and Recognition," summarizing the history and current conditions of this population. *The Long, Lingerin Shadow*, Cottrol's latest work, expands that essay into a comparative exploration of race relations in the Americas over some five centuries. Like the compressed version published in this journal, it benefits from a historian's factual repertoire and encyclopedic grasp and from a legal scholar's dispassionate analysis. Cottrol wears both hats professionally at the George Washington University, where he is Harold Paul Green Research Professor of Law and also teaches history.

At the outset of his book, Cottrol asserts that every country in the Western Hemisphere counts among its citizens descendants of the 10 million Africans who survived the brutal transport to the auction blocks of the Americas. This study, however, concentrates on three distinct regions: Brazil, the United States and a group of seven of the countries

that emerged from the Spanish Empire: Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Peru and Uruguay, selected for the range of issues they illustrate. Worth noting is that Brazil received the most African slaves. Mainland British North America was a minor consumer, the destination of fewer than 400,000, while several times as many Africans went to Spanish America.

The particular form that the "peculiar institution" took in these vastly differing contexts is at the core of Cottrol's study, along with the manner in which racism was practiced and the diverse paths toward overcoming it. Contradictory and inconsistent are two words that crop up often in *The Long, Lingerin Shadow*. We see this in the detail of the complex systems that evolved in Brazil and the Spanish colonies—cruel yet susceptible to flexibility—and in the English colonies' legal and explicit protection of slavery, a condition to which, Cottrol writes, "common law was distinctly hostile."

The book follows these beginnings through emancipation, the official or unofficial segregation that followed it, and scientific racism, with its corollary deprecation, and sometimes wholesale denial, of African heritage and parallel concept of equal-

ity as a zero-sum game. For African descendants everywhere the legacy of centuries-long patterns of discrimination and exclusion has been disproportionate poverty and disadvantage in the extreme. *The Long, Lingering Shadow* ends with a comparison of the ongoing struggle to change course toward full citizenship and economic justice in the regions discussed. Just before Cottrol left to teach law in Buenos Aires during the austral winter, he spoke to *Grassroots Development* about the challenges facing the hemisphere's citizens of African descent as the struggle moves forward and about the genesis of a book that has much to teach. Excerpts of this conversation follow:

What made you want to write The Long, Lingering Shadow?

I had always wanted to look at the contrast between the U.S. and Latin America. What would become the Spanish-speaking nations abolished slavery with their revolutions for independence, while the U.S. had to reconcile the existence of slavery with egalitarian principles. And Brazil remained a highly structured society, indeed a monarchy, so it didn't experience that glaring contradiction and need to resolve it. Certainly there was racial subordination but not categorical exclusion.

Since the 1960s, the U.S. has undergone a more thorough-going civil rights revolution that I would attribute in part to a society uncomfortable with hierarchy. I like to joke that that this is the only

What kind of effort went into the book?

Obviously I used many sources. Today you can cast a much wider net than when I was a graduate and undergraduate student and you had to physically be in the library or the archives or on site. The Internet has made life easier. There is a wider array of books you can get your hands on without having to travel a great distance. For example, all Brazilian master's and doctoral dissertations are online so you can go to Google and get dozens of very well researched works on any topic under the sun. Of course that's also the difficulty because you have to decide what you must read and how you are going to absorb it all.

What about interviews?

I found it fascinating to speak to people about their emerging conscientiousness. But there's a long history of denial in Latin America, so while you have individuals who are looking at things through a

Courtesy George Washington University



Robert J. Cottrol

As more nations in Latin America say they are multiethnic and multicultural, which we now see in national constitutions, it will be interesting to see whether they, too, root out traditional patterns of inequality linked to race.

country in the world where Bill Gates and the bus drivers describe themselves as middle class. Once the U.S. turned against racism it took measures to root it out. As more nations in Latin America say they are multiethnic and multicultural, which we now see in national constitutions, it will be interesting to see whether they, too, root out traditional patterns of inequality linked to race.

racial prism, you wonder how many are really buying into this as opposed to the traditional view that black ancestry should be downplayed.

Who impressed you?

I was very impressed by María Magdalena "Pocha" Lamadrid and Miriam Gomes in Argentina because they have had to struggle so much against the

national ethos that said, “You’re not there. Even if we see you standing in front of us, you’re not there.” And Jorge Ramírez Reyna in Peru, where the issues of African descendants and Asians are missed, along with those of a lot of people who are not culturally indigenous but because of their ancestry are victims of racial exclusion. Also Chief Justice Joaquim Barbosa Gomes of the Brazilian Supreme Court, a leader in the anticorruption fight and the fight for racial equality. He has apparently impressed *Time* magazine as well since it selected him as one of the world’s 100 most influential people in 2013.

What is the takeaway from the Latin American experience in addressing inequality?

We are constantly questioning some of the racially-conscious measures that we have developed over the past 40 years, and many people argue the value of simply ignoring race and looking at race neutrally. And yet we see that if you have a caste system and a tradition of discrimination and stigmatization, you can’t just say, “OK, today all racial discrimination ends.” The Brazilians tried that. The result of just saying that race is no longer a factor in admissions or hiring is that old patterns of exclusion are simply not broken down. That’s a lesson we might learn.

How is affirmative action working in Brazil?

Brazil’s move toward affirmative action is something that we have to see unfold. A good beginning has been made. The opinions of Justice Ricardo Lewandowski were certainly responsible jurisprudence that said, “We as a nation have the obligation to address this,” and he saw it constitutional to do so. Add to that the legislation passed in August 2012. These are hopeful steps, but I see potential problems if we concentrate simply on university admissions. Given the very low quality of public primary and secondary education, and that the poor who suffer from it are mainly *pretos* and *pardos*, you have what educators call the pipeline problem—relatively few students who are even potentially candidates for university admissions, particularly for the more rigorous programs. They might have affirmative action, but will they be able to take advantage of the more rigorous, and more rewarding, professional careers?

Is there any alternative?

Everything is upside down when you take the survivors of a bad educational system and give them the possibility of affirmative action, which is what we have done here in the U.S. But if you simply work on K-12, and if you have a situation where no one going to university is black or brown, are you sending a message to students in K-12 that this is not really for them, they should set their sights lower? You really should do both.

Do you have any guidance on how aid programs can further inclusion?

The strength of the U.S. system is that most professional education is post-graduate so you can have a bad secondary education and correct it before you go on. In Latin America, you have to be ready at 18. I suspect the real impact that donor funding can have is on education, to the extent that it supplements what is going on in primary and secondary schools to give people the skills that are needed, in terms of language, mathematics, an introduction to science, so that they are competitive.

Is there any reason for optimism?

As I indicate in the book, there has been a change of attitude; elites are more willing to think of themselves as multiethnic and much less invested in thinking of themselves as European. But the idea of really effective civil rights law is still in its infancy in Latin America. There are still a lot of people in Latin America who are uncomfortable with the idea of race as race. Some governments treat African descendent issues as they treat indigenous issues, by recognizing a group as *culturally* unique and then developing programs to preserve a specific *culture*. They take the indigenous handbook off the shelf and substitute Afro for Indian. But what about the person who is not part of this culturally distinct universe, who lives in the city and wants to be a bank manager or to buy a house in a decent neighborhood and runs into discrimination? (And that’s a problem with people of indigenous descent as well.) There has been progress toward including the African descendant in the national mosaic, but in terms of developing the policy tool with which to address discrimination, I think that’s still on the horizon.



**O Mundo Negro:
Relações Raciais e a
Constituição do
Movimento Negro
Contemporâneo no Brasil**

By Amílcar Araújo Pereira

*Rio de Janeiro: Pallas and
FAPERJ, 2013*

Brazilian attitudes toward race have shifted dramatically in a very short span of time. The portrayal of Brazil as a “racial democracy,” whose upbeat projection of harmony and equality persisted throughout most of the 20th century, has been displaced by widespread recognition that Afro-Brazilians are disproportionately poor and disadvantaged because of race. According to the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), a government think tank, the average income of white Brazilians is more than double that of African descendants, who also suffer in terms of education and access to health care and public services. This is a serious matter in a country where, according to the 2010 census, 51 percent of the population defines itself as black or of mixed African ancestry. Race has moved to the center of Brazil’s public agenda, along with policies to further integration, eliminate discrimination and assure justice.

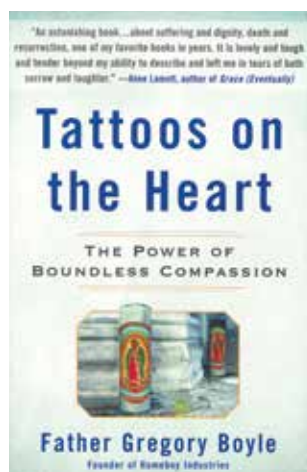
All this makes Amílcar Araújo Pereira’s work a timely contribution to knowledge and memory. For the record, Pereira is the son of a black intellectual-activist father and a white mother. This background sparked his decision to become a historian and his scholarly focus on race in Brazil, academic goals that both parents encouraged. His book, whose title translates into English as “The Black World: Race Relations and the Formation of the Contemporary Black Movement in Brazil,” emerged from his doctoral dissertation. It is substantially cornered on the testimony of Afro-Brazilian activists and U.S.-based scholars and other professionals.

Full disclosure: I was last person that Pereira interviewed in the United States. In the late 1970s, while I was a graduate student and an intern with the Brazil team at the Inter-American Foundation, the

IAF added to its portfolio five Afro-Brazilian grantees that were developing the cultural awareness and identity of their constituencies. According to Pereira, these awards made IAF a pioneer, the first U.S. government agency, in fact the first international donor, to support the cause of Afro-Brazilians. Such aid had been unheard-of, first, because it was at odds with the official denial of the existence of racism in Brazil and, second, because, according to sources cited by Pereira, the military regime then in power considered it subversive and a threat to national security. In December 1977, through the Embassy of the United States in Brasília, the Brazilian government notified the IAF that it was suspending all IAF activity in the country, a hiatus that lasted five years. In 2008, Pereira reviewed the files and spoke with me about this episode as I had experienced it. *O Mundo Negro* is to my knowledge the only publication in which it is fully and accurately documented.

Pereira organizes his material into four chapters that take the reader through theories of race and racial democracy; the origins of the Afro-Brazilian movement; the “circulation of ideas” among the U.S., Brazil and Africa; and the contemporary iteration of the Brazilian movement, between 1971 and 1995. *O Mundo Negro* is yet another reminder that the scale and duration of slavery in Brazil were unmatched in the Western Hemisphere. Most historians today believe that of the 9 million to 11 million slaves shipped across the Atlantic between the 16th and 19th centuries, some 5 million landed in Brazil. When Brazil finally abolished slavery in 1888, rather than support their transition, it left the former slaves to fend for themselves.

This neglect had a profound impact on society, contributing to the extreme inequality that continues to this day, even as Brazilians acknowledge the past and enter a new era of consciousness. The Constitution of 1988 criminalized racism and race-based abuse, and every presidential administration since ratification has taken steps toward inclusion. *O Mundo Negro* illuminates the crucial role of Afro-Brazilian leaders and activists in this process, and more importantly, it honors their contribution and memory. This fascinating account is a “must read” for those who care about race relations, social change and inclusion in Brazil.—Miriam E. Brandao, IAF representative for Peru and former IAF representative for Brazil



Tattoos on the Heart

By Gregory Boyle, S.J.

Free Press; New York, 2010

Gangs in Mexico and Central America have become a scourge and

source of fear to the local population, including in the communities where IAF grantee partners live and work. Gang-related violence accounts for many of the 96 homicides per 100,000 citizens recorded in 2012 in Honduras, a country that has skyrocketed to the top of the murder charts. The numbers for El Salvador and Guatemala reached 69 and nearly 39 per 100,000, respectively. To put these figures into perspective, the United States had 4.7 homicides per 100,000 in 2011.

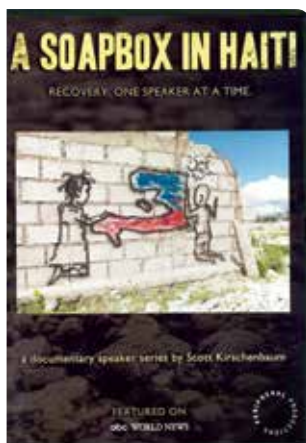
Ironically, many of the most violent gangs in Central America, notably Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18, were born on the streets of Los Angeles and other U.S. cities, then exported, first to El Salvador and then to Honduras and Guatemala, when members were deported as felons. Gangs, often in conjunction with narcotraffickers, routinely assassinate honest prosecutors, witnesses and judges considered threats. Prisons are overcrowded, poorly maintained and often ruled by the inmates themselves, who continue to do business via cell phones.

Officials in cities throughout the U.S. and Central America, as well as development professionals, are desperate for an approach that focuses beyond police, prosecutions and prisons and provides young people an exit from crime. *Tattoos on the Heart* documents one such approach that seems to be working in the barrio of Los Angeles: Homeboy Industries, started 25 years ago by the author, a dynamic Jesuit priest. Father Gregory Boyle begins by insisting that a need to belong and feel important drives youths to join gangs. Once they do, their life expectancy shrinks. Boyle has lost count of the young people he has buried, including innocent victims of drive-by shootings.

It was for the survivors—young people who have been on drugs and in prison—that Boyle founded Homeboy Industries, which works tirelessly to teach its constituents marketable skills and build their self-esteem. He boasts that Homeboy Industries is the only employer requiring its hires to have a felony conviction to work in its bakery, restaurants, catering service, farmer markets and graphic design shop that also makes clothes including a T-shirt with “Jobs, not Jails” on the front and “Nothing stops a bullet like a job” on the back. While in the program, the youths—mostly Latinos, some recent arrivals—study for their GED, improve their English and gain work experience. Homeboy also offers them housing, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, counseling, even parenting classes; legal aid and mental health services are open to anybody who walks in the door. “Homies” are often covered with tattoos, which the staff at Homeboy Industries offers to remove using the latest laser technology. Last year, 400 young men and women took classes ranging from anger management to yoga; 300 were enrolled in vocational training; 300 alumni are employed by Homeboy Industries. The cost of this comprehensive program totaled some \$12 million, a budget that would be difficult to match in Central America.

Boyle also describes his service as a mediator brokering truces between gangs and the police during his early years in the barrio. He stopped, feeling the process gave gangs too much credibility and recognition, but his involvement brings to mind the truce brokered among imprisoned gang leaders, the Catholic Church, the police and other authorities in El Salvador and, more recently, in Honduras. While homicides have plummeted by 50 percent in El Salvador, the wisdom of negotiations with “criminals” is hotly debated. Most striking, however, was that the gang leaders wanted training and jobs as the price of peace.

Boyle’s life and work in the “hood,” as a parish priest and civic leader, has won him the respect of gang members and their families—along with the nickname “G-Dog,” also the title of a documentary on Boyle that recently premiered in Los Angeles. His book is compassionate, inspiring and full of hope despite the dire circumstances of the young people involved. This is a good read, but if you don’t have time, at least visit www.homeboyindustries.org.—Patrick Ahern, IAF representative for Nicaragua



**A Soapbox in Haiti—
Recovery. One Speaker at
a Time.**

*Directed by Scott
Kirschenbaum*

Fractured Atlas: 2010

The earthquake that rocked Haiti on Jan. 12, 2010, killed some 200,000 Haitians and injured, traumatized and displaced millions more. As the media broadcast the destruction, and aid flooded the country, the world discussed how to help. But one perspective was barely expressed—that of the Haitians affected.

Scott Kirschenbaum gives these missing voices a platform in *A Soapbox in Haiti—Recovery. One Speaker at a Time*. Filmed in fall 2010, the documentary consists of 12 speakers, accessible in any order—a singer, an aspiring rap artist, a doctor, priest and other citizens. The absence of other narration brings the viewer into close contact as the individual on screen offers vivid glimpses into the devastation, the efforts to recover and his or her aspirations for Haiti.

Some speakers are associated with IAF grantee partners that, because they were among the few institutions functioning after the disaster, rose to its challenges—Fondation Festival Film Jakmèl (FFFJ), Oganizasyon Kominotè Fanm Veyon (OKFV), Rezo Fanm Fwonty Ba Plato (Renzo Fanm) and Sant Pon Ayiti (SPA). Students enrolled in FFFJ's film school, for example, dug their cameras out of the rubble and showed the world the damage, prompting an unexpected flow of contributions toward recovery. Inundated with refugees, Renzo Fanm quickly

set up makeshift dormitories for the homeless and connected pregnant women with medical care. (See *Grassroots Development* 2010.)

Locations, sounds and raw emotion bolster Kirschenbaum's candid approach and reinforce the focus on each Haitian featured. Even viewers who know nothing of Haiti should be captivated by quotations from a rich culture tradition. Rhyming to the beat of his *tanbou*, or Haitian drum, Pierre Yves Edmond calls on his village to rebuild and explains how neighbors formed a *konbit*, or work group, to launch a radio station. Renold Laurent revisits the devastation in Port-au-Prince with a poem recited among dusty tents sheltering the displaced, the spirited chatter of children in the background. Rapper Jacques Belfort Belfort, sings out "Haiti is your country. Work for her." Certainly another speaker, digital cartographer Guensmark Alcin, did that, and very resourcefully, by creating *Open Street Map*, a guide detailing reliable and direct routes, to help first responders access and transport the injured. Civil engineer Joel Lochard reacted to his own personal tragedy by pulling himself together to provide emergency services.

On Jan. 10, 2011, ABC News marked the first anniversary of the earthquake with excerpts from *A Soapbox in Haiti*. The entire work was screened the same day in communities throughout Haiti, a vivid reminder to learn from history and the mistakes of the past. In 2010 these included defective construction, easily reduced to rubble, and poorly planned roads that hindered rescue efforts. Kirschenbaum has expressed the hope that the 12 Haitians on screen will spark a grassroots dialogue on taking responsibility for the recovery efforts still ongoing, on recognizing the beauty of Haiti and on making a positive impact on future generations. "Haiti is your country. Work for her." The documentary can be viewed at www.asoapboxinhaiti.com.—Amanda Hess, IAF program staff assistant



Yensi Santamaría, farmer and student, Santa Marta, El Salvador.

Sean Sprague

How the Salvadoran Diaspora Funds Options for the Future

By Megan Fletcher

One wet weekday evening in May, two dozen Salvadoran immigrants found their way to a restaurant in a Virginia suburb of Washington, D.C. They weren't drawn there by the *pupusas* or the *cumbia* rhythms. They had come to learn from Andrés "Elmer" Arias and his like-minded associates how to help their families and friends back in El Salvador.

Arias arrived in Washington, D.C., from El Salvador in 1980, desperate to escape the civil war. He was broke, just 19 and spoke no English, but he managed to find a job cleaning bathrooms and washing dishes. Fifteen years later, he opened his own restaurant in Fairfax, Virginia, the first of two. Along with friendships formed on the job and on the soccer field, his enterprises allow him to channel energy and resources into binational efforts that benefit communities in the United States and El Salvador. As someone who avoids the spotlight, Arias was caught off-guard in 2012 when the White House honored him as a Champion of Change for organizing Fútbol Positivo, whose three soccer leagues give young people in northern Virginia the opportunity to play the game in an environment that encourages them to stay in school and to reject the lure of gangs and drugs. The Fairfax Police Department credits Fútbol Positivo with contributing to a 65 percent decrease in juvenile delinquency over a three-year period.

But Fútbol Positivo was just Arias' most recent launch. For years, he has been collaborating with other Salvadorans to raise funds for communities in El Salvador. After Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in 1998, Arias coordinated a massive drive that not only resulted in the delivery of food, clothing and other supplies to Salvadorans devastated by the storm but also informed the diaspora's response

to subsequent natural disasters. In 2001, he founded the Salvadoran-American Chamber of Commerce, whose first initiative helped a community in El Salvador get started on organic production. Seven years later, he successfully incorporated Fundación para la Educación Social, Económica y Cultural (FUPEC) in the U.S. and El Salvador. The groundbreaking nonprofit organization, now an IAF grantee, helps hometown associations of migrants (HTAs) in the United States and residents of their respective communities of origin pool resources and invest in development for long-term results. Thousands of Salvadorans who, like Arias, are determined to maintain ties with and assist people back home are members of the 90-some HTAs currently affiliated with FUPEC—almost half the Salvadoran HTAs in the United States.

A median age of 23.9 puts El Salvador among the youngest countries in the hemisphere, and its young people have been a priority in the diaspora's development effort. Salvadorans in the U.S. are conservatively estimated to number 1.5 million and most left home at an early age, like Arias did. Many working through FUPEC want young men and women back home to have what they did not: a future there, in El Salvador. They see a role for their financial support but the challenges are daunting: 35 percent of Salvadorans are poor and, according to the International Labor Organization, some 24 percent of those between the ages of 15 and 24 neither work nor attend school. The situation is compounded by the legions of undereducated, underemployed youths in the ranks of gangs that had substantially contributed to a national murder rate of 69.1 per 100,000 in 2011 and a toll of disproportionately young victims. Until a truce that went into effect last year significantly

reduced the number of homicides, El Salvador ranked as the second most violent country in the hemisphere, behind Honduras. Everyone, from the gang leaders to the Salvadoran president, agrees that education and employment are crucial to a future of peace and a way out of poverty.

Even before FUPEC became fully incorporated, the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) and Banco Agrícola, El Salvador's largest bank, approached Arias about partnering to improve educational opportunities in El Salvador via a joint venture called Manos Unidas por El Salvador (Manos Unidas). The plan called for FUPEC to structure the program, identify potential U.S.-based HTAs as participants and administer a pool of resources. FUPEC developed rules requiring Salvadoran communities to compete for awards via detailed proposals that commit the applicant and its respective HTA each to contribute 15 percent of the cost of their project while PADF and Banco Agrícola cover 70 percent. Reina de Paniagua, FUPEC's executive director in San Salvador, and her colleague, Engel Flores, are

available to guide the applicants. "Raising consciousness takes more than a year," de Paniagua said. "An organization matures relative to the attention it receives." She cautions members of HTAs to trust the priorities of hometown residents and to let them take charge. Manos Unidas requires individuals from both the HTA and the community's committee to learn bookkeeping and the other basic skills necessary to provide an accurate accounting.

Since its launch in 2006, Manos Unidas has awarded more than 200 grants funding school infrastructure and scholarships in disadvantaged communities throughout El Salvador. San Julián, in the western department of Sonsonate, offers an example of how collaboration with an HTA gets started and what it can achieve through the program. José Mauricio Gallegos, just 18 when he left San Julián to flee the civil war, began traveling back to his hometown in 1996. The poverty so tore at his conscience that he eventually gathered 10 friends in Virginia, founded the HTA Comité de San Julián and has served as its president since 2000. The HTA's affiliation with FUPEC and

its subsequent participation in Manos Unidas resulted in an investment of \$55,000 in classrooms, a computer center, a multipurpose room and a soccer field in San Julián. Of that amount, FUPEC disbursed \$25,000 and residents convinced their local government to provide another \$30,000. "It's a dream come true to give back to the same schools where I studied and help the children of today," said Gallegos.

Success with Manos Unidas has inspired FUPEC and its HTA associates to focus beyond education. An IAF grant of \$286,485 awarded in 2011 is helping FUPEC



Elmer Arias, center, with Mauricio Gallegos and Federico Espinoza at La Hacienda, the restaurant Arias opened in 1995.

Megan Fletcher



Graffiti art is a reminder of the conflict that caused many Salvadorans to flee their country.

and its affiliated Salvadoran communities invest in development. To date seven grassroots groups from throughout El Salvador have received funding conditioned on the HTAs and their respective hometowns' mobilization of 40 percent of the resources required while the IAF contributes 50 percent; and FUPEC raises 10 percent from other sources. Most of the successful applicants emphasized young people or agriculture. The proposal submitted by a cooperative in Santa Marta, Cabañas, a community 90 kilometers from San Salvador, combined both priorities. Its farmers, all between the ages of 15 and 30, cultivate organic produce, raise tilapia and make organic fertilizer. The cooperative has invested its award in a multipurpose center; an electrically-powered system that irrigates crops consistently, making them less vulnerable to fungi and bacteria; and in training in business skills. According to Moisés López, 28, a member of the coordinating committee, the farmers now keep records and a balance sheet, so they know if they are turning a profit; they understand the value of reinvesting some of their earnings. Partnering with another cooperative has resulted in better prices.

"As young people, we like to relate to others our age, so we joined the cooperative. We see that young people can do this work," said a young farmer who identified himself as Santos. "We've improved our production, our workplace, our group and the entire community." When *Grassroots Development* visited, young men and women were filling trays with seeds for fertilization, snipping ripe jalapeños and clear-

ing one of the cooperative's four greenhouses for the rotating detoxification period. Workers step into a pool before entering a greenhouse, to rid their shoes of contaminants. The young men who founded the cooperative say the incorporation of more young women as members makes for a more orderly workplace and more careful handling so produce is less likely to become damaged. Weekly shifts are staggered because many members still attend school or work on family plots. Security is a concern; duties include night watch, recently facilitated by electricity that powers flood lights, thanks to FUPEC. Many members see the cooperative as the key to a livelihood in Santa Marta and are determined not to follow in the footsteps of relatives in the United States. For Francisco Ramírez, who works several jobs in metropolitan Washington, D.C., and heads the HTA Comité Santa Marta, the progress makes his investment of time, energy and resources worthwhile.

An unexpected consequence of the IAF's grant to FUPEC has been the elevation of the committee in the community of Santa Teresa to Fundación Santa Teresa, a brand new IAF grantee that will use its IAF funding to involve diaspora Salvadorans in efforts to improve agriculture. Federico Espinoza, who has lived in northern Virginia since 1985, is president of the HTA Comité Santa Teresa that motivated residents to form the committee that initially helped the elderly. Now its longer-term vision is to prepare young people to take advantage of local opportunities. "We're investing in their desire to work, we're pushing our communities

forward together.” said Espinoza. “This is development that is happening. It’s beautiful to see.”

In addition to Salvadorans, Elmer Arias has mentored Hondurans, Guatemalans and Peruvians who want to organize hometown associations supporting their communities of origin. “Surround yourself with others who share your mentality,” he advised them. Certainly that describes Espinoza, Ramírez and Gallegos, men who also share his narrative and respect his tireless efforts on behalf of Salvadorans in two countries. As the conduit channeling considerable resources from donors to recipients, Arias also comes under close scrutiny and has had to learn to manage criticism with grace. “I need to feel 100 percent sure that everything has been done right, and then keep on working,” he said. “The acts speak for themselves.” He admits that the pressure has nearly made him give up. But, he said, “If I do, thousands of families will be left without help when they need it.”

In 2011, the most recent year for which figures are available, the diaspora sent \$3.6 billion to El Salvador; remittances sent worldwide were estimated at \$372 billion. But for years, working migrants

abroad have been sending home whatever they could afford, often at considerable sacrifice, resulting in a volume of cash that has held together the economy in developing countries around the globe. In the early 2000s, when this financial flow attracted the attention of the foreign-assistance community, it provoked optimism that some benefit of these resources could be channeled beyond individual households. Often arrangements proposed toward that end were met with failure because the parties underestimated, or totally ignored, the complexity of the interaction among HTAs, the communities and the nonprofits or government agencies brokering the project. FUPEC took a different course, through the grassroots, patiently cultivating relationships as organizations matured. What resulted was an important breakthrough, allowing Salvadorans in the diaspora and in El Salvador to maximize their support for young people, so they take charge of their future. Other diaspora communities may learn from FUPEC’s pursuit of development.

Megan Fletcher is IAF’s congressional affairs specialist.

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Megan Fletcher, center in white blouse, with farmers of the cooperative in Santa Marta.



Courtesy Bahia Street

Students enrolled in Bahia Street.

Bridging Brazil's Academic Gap

By David Fleischer and Alexis Toussaint

A rivan Ribeiro Reis still tears up behind his glasses when he recalls how 20 years ago he quit his job as a day laborer in the industrial complex in Manaus to bet on his future. The stakes were high, because he was leaving his brother as the sole provider of a multigenerational family. And the odds that the gamble would pay off seemed against him. Reis wanted to study agronomy at the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), one of the institutions that make up Brazil's public system of higher education offering students a first-rate education at taxpayer expense. Reis knew that in every department, applicants would far exceed the slots available and admission would be strictly based on the *vestibular*, a three-day exam that tests mastery of Portuguese, English or Spanish, math, social sciences, hard sciences and the skills necessary to write a lengthy essay on a topic drawn from current affairs. To talk about a passing score on the *vestibular* misses the point; passing means admission to the university and vice versa.

The exam is tough and preparation for its rigors is only available in private schools or cram courses, often expensive, known as *cursinhos*. That means

graduates of public schools or individuals who are self-taught are unlikely to score high enough on the vestibular to be admitted to a public university, especially in programs in medicine, law or engineering. This reflection on the quality of instruction is decried as a serious indictment of public education and, because students in public schools are overwhelmingly poor, as a prime obstacle to overcoming inequality and disparities in wealth. The hundreds of thousands of Brazilians who took to the streets this year cited the government's neglect of public schools among the reasons for the protests.

Alternativo de Petropolis do Amazonas Vicente Ferreira da Silva (ALTPET), an IAF grantee until December 2012, is a pioneer among the grassroots and nongovernmental organizations working to address the academic gap so that young people from struggling families can pursue higher education. For the past 25 years ALTPET has been offering impoverished young men and women *cursinhos* taught by volunteer instructors drawn from graduate students and university faculty. "The *cursinho* used to be organized on the terrace of Dona Iracema, now

90 and one of the oldest residents of the Petropolis neighborhood where we operate,” recalled Jonas Gomes, ALTPET’s program coordinator, a graduate of its *cursinho* and professor of industrial engineering at UFAM. Reis enrolled in ALTPET’s *cursinho* in 1993, mastered the material—despite the noise and exposure to the elements during the classes then held in open air—and passed the *vestibular* a year later. He graduated from UFAM in 1999 and now works as an agronomist in Amazonas for the Brazilian Ministry of Agrarian Development. “The *cursinho* helped me learn math and science and improved my writing skills—all crucial to passing the *vestibular*,” Reis told *Grassroots Development* from his office in Manaus. He did so well in UFAM’s science courses that ALTPET invited him to teach that section of its *cursinho*.

In recent years, brand new secondary school graduates throughout Brazil increasingly take the Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM), but it has not yet completely replaced the *vestibular*, and students from public schools usually do as poorly on the ENEM. ALTPET now prepares students for both exams. By 2010, when ALTPET received its IAF grant, its *cursinhos* taught by a corps of 50 volunteers had reached 1,800 disadvantaged young Brazilians in Manaus. Another 1,000 students went through the program during the IAF grant period. Even with classes increased to five days a week, thanks to the IAF’s funding, the young men and women enrolled have to be quick studies: Both exams require mastery of the vast material covered during the last three years of the Brazilian high school curriculum, which, along with practice exams, is compressed into two and a half hours daily over six months. Nonetheless, students from ALTPET have had an impressive record: four out of 10 graduates of ALTPET’s *cursinho* have passed the *vestibular* or ENEM and entered universities. To place that ratio in context, consider that the class to graduate from UFAM as agronomists in 2013 began with 30 students culled from 230 via their exam scores. Public universities in other regions of Brazil boast even lower admission rates.

Race adds another dimension to access to educational opportunity, given the correlation of race with poverty in Brazil. According to the 2010 census, 55 percent of Brazilians identify as of indigenous or African descent, but only between 5 percent and

10 percent of the students enrolled public or private institutions of higher education belong to these ethnicities. For at least a decade, the Brazilian government has been working to remedy this statistic via quotas and by adding points to scores on entrance exams, enabling more Afro-Brazilian and indigenous students to enter public universities, or via scholarships funding study in private universities. The application of these measures has been controversial. Critics point out, for example, that they don’t necessarily benefit the disadvantaged and that graduates of public school who do end up in a university are often seriously underprepared. Those arguments notwithstanding, affirmative action, Brazilian style, has withstood legal challenges, including one that reached the Supreme Court. “The quota system in use at UFAM and the State University of Amazonas (UEA) has definitely given Afro- and indigenous Brazilians more opportunities,” said Gomes. “And so have federally- and municipally-funded scholarships. The problem is ensuring that these students receive their degree on schedule.”

IAF grantee partner Bahia Street is also forging ahead to level the academic playing field—for African descendent girls and young women between the ages of 6 and 17 from public schools in Salvador’s favelas. Without intervention they risk facing the most extreme exclusion of any segment of Brazil’s population in terms of education at all levels and later in employment, access to health care and participation in civic life, according to Brazil’s Geographic and Statistical Institute (IBGE) and Institute of Applied Research (IPEA). Since Bahia Street started operations, 500 girls and young women have gone through the program and all of them are now gainfully employed. “This organization prepares children and adolescents to confront the social, political and economic challenges and break the cycle of poverty,” explained Rita de Cassia, Bahia Street’s director.

Since its founding in 1997, Bahia Street has targeted its academic programs at just getting students into the next grade level in elementary and middle school and helping them make a successful transition into secondary school. Often the youngest girls must learn to read and write. After-school sessions reinforce public-school classes in Portuguese, history, geography, math and English in anticipation of final examinations. Basic instruction in personal hygiene,



Jonas Gomes, fourth from the left, with students. Below: ALTPET's classes used to be held in spaces exposed to the elements, left. IAF's support helped ALTPET move into the facility on the right.





Bahia Street.

nutrition and safety is also included. A team of psychologists monitors constantly, alert to challenges at home, in school and on the street. Incidents of child abuse and domestic violence are resolved directly with the family and everyone is taught the risks of teen pregnancy and substance abuse. In addition to academics, students take advantage of enrichment programs that mirror those offered in elite private schools: classes in the arts, physical education and civics; a marching band and a dance troupe that give public performances; and field trips to museums, parks, libraries and historic sites.

More recently, Bahia Street has taken into account the changing job market and its demand for more skilled workers. “We began to feel responsible for guiding our students toward university admission,” de Cassia said. Bahia Street received its IAF award in 2010 and invested the funds in offering its program on a daily basis and placing more emphasis on math and science. An evening *cursinho* is open to Bahia Street graduates and working women from the community at large. So far, 10 young women from the *cursinho* have been admitted to the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), the State University of Bahia (UNEB) or private institutions offering scholarships to Afro-Brazilians. De Cassia noted the demand for the *cursinho* is growing, along with interest in pursuing an undergraduate degree. A university education is very much in the sights of Livia de Jesus Nascimento, 16. Abandoned by her parents and raised by her grandmother, she discovered Bahia Street’s after-school opportunities five years ago and has been enrolled in its program since then. “I intend to continue studying and take the ENEM or *vestibular*,” Livia said. “Girls and women transform their lives, ideas and attitudes with Bahia Street. My father was a drug addict and my mother never came back for me, but I managed to become self-confident and I learned to use the obstacles in the way as stepping stones.”

Recently ALTPET also broadened its program in response to local demand for basic education in reading, writing and math as well as vocational training and digital inclusion that prepare skilled workers for the industrial complex in Manaus. But Gomes remains focused on the insufficient supply of qualified professionals in engineering and technical fields to staff the complex and on secondary school students interested in these careers, who require preparation. ALTPET’s community radio station uses popular music to attract listeners and advertise its offerings. “You have to speak the language of the youth,” Jonas Gomes told IAF staff when he visited the United States invited by the Department of State. “A lot of people still don’t know about our work.”

The Bolsa Familia that has lifted millions out of poverty via cash transfers conditioned on school attendance has resulted in more children and teenagers in school than ever before. According to a study published by IPEA in 2012, a decade into the Bolsa Familia, academic achievement has not improved. “Low-income students have better access to higher education, which was the privilege of the few until the 1990s,” said Gomes. “But if access has improved, knowledge has not. The quality of education in public schools is getting worse. As a professor of engineering in a public university, I see students with problems with math and verbal expression that should have been resolved before they enrolled in university. They might be prepared to pass the ENEM or vestibular but they are not ready for calculus or to write at a university level. Public education has to be reformed beginning with the most basic level.” That would require serious public investment in infrastructure, curriculum and teachers. Meanwhile ALTPET, Bahia Street and organizations like them continue to offer an essential service to disadvantaged young Brazilians with aspirations for a better future.

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